A STUDY OF METAPHYSICAL DISPUTATION

ILLUSTRATED BY THE LOCKE-BERKELEY DISPUTE ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD AND BY A SIMILAR MODERN DISPUTE

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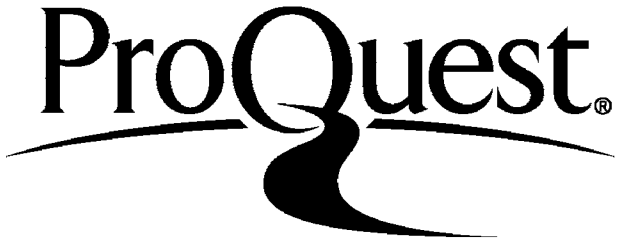

C O N T E N T S

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The metaphysical dispute purporting to be about the ultimate nature of material things waged by Berkeley against Locke has these puzzling features:

1. It is irresolvable; both conclusions are designed to be logically fortified against refutation - by fact, commonsense belief, or ordinary linguistic use. Thus each becomes logically necessary.
2. Nevertheless the contestants appeal to plain facts and ordinary speech in support of their theories, which thus appear to be empirical hypotheses.
3. The Locke-Berkeley dispute, although irresolvable, persists, and recurs in some twentieth century disputation about the material world and our knowledge of it.

A detailed study of selected metaphysical texts reveals these eccentric characteristics. The hypothesis is offered that they appear eccentric only if we expect metaphysics to be like the natural sciences, philology, or plain description of empirical situations. I claim to explain points 1 - 3 as follows:

1. The dispute is irresolvable, and its conclusions _a priori_ true in terms of the respective systems, because metaphysicians do not provide or describe ordinary information about the world or about language, but interpret it in accordance with a specific motive, determined by non-philosophical interest, and in the service of a general attitude which is expressed in a theory about how the world ought to be described. Redefinitions and special interpretations give an _a priori_ air to the conclusions, but the dispute is basically a clash of attitude.
2. The metaphysical views look empirical because they arise from matter-of-fact considerations, and present a 'picture' of what the material world _really_ is, though neither a description nor a scientific explanation.

3. The dispute is persistent, because the attitudes involved in its expression are common outlooks, which have been evident in western philosophy since the Ancient Greek Philosophers. It is also persistent because clashes of attitude can never be conclusively settled.

The nature of a metaphysical view becomes clearer if we think about it by analogy with a work of art, rather than by analogy with a scientific hypothesis, a commonsense description, or a philological account.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"As is well known, the metaphysical problem about the nature of material things, the question, that is to say, as to the ultimate constitution and structure of such objects as books and pennies and soap bubbles, has given rise to different theories none of which has, in essentials, turned out to be universally acceptable to professional philosophers. It has to be pointed out in this connection that each theory has its convinced adherents and that the arguments for each theory, though not convincing to some philosophers, are accepted as conclusive by others. This is a bewildering state of affairs and we may well wonder what has happened to create it:..." [1]

1. Morris Lazerowitz, "Substratum", Philosophical Analysis, ed. Max Black, Cornell University Press: 1950. p. 176

My aim in this thesis is to point out some puzzling features of a metaphysical dispute which purports to be about the nature of the external world, and then to offer an explanation.

For example, I shall try to show that although metaphysical conclusions are not in any way testable, cannot be conclusively confirmed or refuted, neither are they meaningless or pointless. And, for example, I shall go on to say in what ways they are meaningful.

I do not intend to attack metaphysics in general, nor to fight against any specific metaphysical view. My object is to understand how a metaphysical dispute functions, and what gives rise to it. This could involve any number of different kinds of study, so it is important to state at the start exactly what I do not aim to do, before giving some indication of my positive purpose.

First, no attempt will be made to produce a detailed historical study, or that sort of textual scholarship designed to elucidate ambiguities and to say what the metaphysician <u>really meant</u>. That is, my primary purpose is not to trace the influence of one metaphysician upon another, the extent to which their views are explicable in terms of historical setting, or the intellectual development revealed from their earliest writings to their final systems. Naturally none of these considerations will be irrelevant. But this thesis is not mainly concerned with them.

So the expositions given of the metaphysical views for illustrative purposes are not meant to be complete or critical. I have tried to describe as briefly as possible the central parts of views held by Locke, Berkeley, Alexander and Lord Russell which claim to give an account of the ultimate nature of physical things. It would have been impossible here to give <u>full</u> descriptions of all that these philosophers said, let

alone of Russell's long and adaptable philosophical development. The purpose has been to pick out some self-sufficient metaphysical views which seem to be representative of a persistent British dispute. If, in an effort to avoid making the wood invisible for the trees, I have not discussed all the possible scholarly interpretations of what these philosophers asserted, my defence is that the four views expounded here do seem to have been held by the four metaphysicians to whom they are attributed, and if even this is not agreed, then at least it must be admitted that they are views which metaphysicians might very well hold. This sufficiently justifies the claim that they are appropriate material for a study of metaphysical disputation about the nature of the external world.

Secondly, I do not plan to judge or evaluate these metaphysical views. On the contrary my intention is to avoid taking sides in the dispute which they represent. It seems that an impartial study of metaphysical claims, made as far as possible by forgetting personal preferences or prejudices, will yield a more reliable hypothesis to explain them. For example, the weak spot many of us have for Berkeley, whose writings appear in many ways more charming than Locke's, must not be allowed to develop into a blind spot.

Thirdly, the examination of metaphysical dispute will not be made in accordance with a predetermined set of psychological hypotheses in mind. The study will not, for example, be psycho-analytic. It seems to me that such predetermined formulae result not in an explanation of metaphysical views, but in descriptions which seem to fit any kind of view whatever. Psycho-analytic conclusions appear easily adaptable to <u>any</u> subject-matter, and consequently fail to explain the peculiarities of a given subject. I have in mind Dr. J.O. Wisdom's psycho-analysis of Berkeley's metaphysics[2], and how

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2. See J.O. Wisdom, <u>The Unconscious Origin of Berkeley's Philosophy</u>, Hogarth: 1953

it fails not only to explain why Berkeley chose metaphysics, e.g. rather than art, to satisfy his unconscious needs, but also why he chose to advance the particular metaphysical view he propounded. The alleged unconscious need to eliminate Matter from the scheme of things might equally well, if we pay close attention to metaphysical argumentation itself, apply to Locke's view. There are different metaphysical methods of seeming to "banish Matter" from the universe, and it could reasonably be argued that esse est percipi "got rid of it" no more, and no less, than the doctrine that Matter is Unknowable.

It may then be concluded that I hope to make a linguistic analysis of metaphysical dispute, or what in America would be called a "semantic analysis". It remains to be said in what sense this is true.

English-speaking philosophers, and the Vienna Circle, have produced in this century several subtly different but distinguishable linguistic analytic methods, and sometimes attendant theories or hints about the nature of metaphysics. The clearest and most recent account of the history of this development, stemming from philosophers like Moore, Russell and Wittgenstein, is to be found in the Introduction to the collection of articles from Analysis.[3] I would not presume to attempt an equally full account here, and indeed it would be unnecessary. I shall therefore, in order to indicate to what extent I plan to follow the line of one sort of current philosophical analysis, and to avoid the presuppositions on which other sorts seem to be based, discuss briefly some of the main approaches which can be made to the study of metaphysics in linguistic idiom.

Logical postivism, the analytic method of which claimed to show that metaphysical assertions are literally meaningless, is no longer as fashionable as it was in the period between the wars, and seems to have been relinquished by its main British exponent, Professor

3. See Philosophy and Analysis, edited with an Introduction by Margaret Macdonald, Blackwell: 1954. pp. 1-14

Ayer, whose vehement attack on metaphysics, Language, Truth and Logic, first excited its readers nearly twenty years ago. However I believe that the disparagement of metaphysics which that doctrine encouraged is still expressed, though in less blatant form, and for this reason it seems worth stating here why its approach to the study of metaphysical assertions seems wrong, and consequently why it will not provide a slogan for this thesis.

Like all analytic methods in contemporary philosophy, Wittgenstein has been named as the putative father of logical positivism. Whether or not this is so, Wittgenstein in his early work did give a vivid statement of what was to be its spirit:

> "The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science, i.e. something which has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other - he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy - but it would be the only strictly correct method." [4]

It now seems evident that the principle of verification in its original form was wrong. That is, the suggestion that no proposition has meaning unless its truth value can be determined either - in the case of empirical assertions - by empirical observation of the situation it describes, or - in the case of a priori propositions - by reference to some well-ordered system, is false if 'has meaning' is to be taken literally. To tell a metaphysician that he had "given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions" would quite rightly not satisfy him. If we accused Alexander, for example, of giving no meaning to the phrase "Space-Time", he may reasonably have asked what we supposed the purpose of his two volumes had been; for Space, Time and Deity, as I hope to show, is designed to give a meaning to this and other phrases. Indeed,

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4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Kegan Paul: 1922. p. 187 & p. 189 (para. no. 6.53)

metaphysicians take trouble to tell us what meanings they annex to terms, when those terms are not intended to function in accordance with ordinary usage. I believe that metaphysical assertions should be examined impartially and not with the preconception that they must be phoney. It is quite in order to admit that metaphysical assertions are untestable either by empirical observation or by reference to some well-ordered system - like multiplication tables, or the class calculus of formal logic - without admitting that they have nothing whatever to say about anything. When logical positivists announced that metaphysical statements were nonsense, they did not intend to say that they were word-jumbles like "twodown cat ties", or semantic confusions like "mathematics is pink and square" - or, if they did, what they said was patently false. 'Nonsense', we can suspect, was used emotively. Professor Ayer once made it clear that by this term he meant "down right nonsense", "plain nonsense", "rubbish".[5] The objections to this doctrine are perhaps too familiar to bear repetition, although they will be developed where appropriate in the course of this study.

In current philosophical analysis there is another less blatantly false but equally disparaging view about the nature of a metaphysical conclusion, which I shall hope to refute in this thesis. It seems to me to misrepresent what metaphysicians do with their words more subtly than, but as much as, logical positivism. It is a view held by practically all the linguistic philosophers in England today, and studies of metaphysics are commonly made in accordance with its main assumption, which is that metaphysicians are confused about the uses of ordinary language terms and expressions.

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5. See A.J. Ayer, "The Genesis of Metaphysics", Philosophy and Analysis, p. 24 & 25. For an account of the suspicion that logical positivists used 'nonsense' emotively see Morris Lazerowitz, "The Positivistic Use of 'Nonsense'", Mind, Vol. LV, July 1946. pp. 247 - 255

The claim made by these predominant philosophers is, briefly, that philosophical problems, by which they often mean metaphysical dispute, are resolved as soon as they have been exhibited for what they are - the results of linguistic confusions or mistakes.

> "F.P. Ramsey referred to Russell's theory of descriptions as 'the paradigm of philosophy'. By it Russell seemed to have dispelled a philosophical puzzle about the status of fictitious objects by a closer attention to the meanings of words and sentences. This idea, with which Moore must also be associated, that philosophical problems might be solved by a better understanding of the meaning of language, was one of those simple, but profound, ideas which modify the thought of a whole philosophical age. Transformed later by the genius of Wittgenstein, it has been continuously fertile. Examples of its effects have always appeared in Analysis and now predominate." [6]

By implication, this view claims that a metaphysical theory is false and can be refuted once a careful semantic study has revealed that it involves a mistaken notion of how terms, phrases or sentences would ordinarily be used. The accusation made against most, if not all, metaphysical theories is that they are the result of misdescribing, misusing, or otherwise abusing the plain speech we commonly use over shop counters or at cocktail parties.

While I hope to show that metaphysicians do not make mistakes about language, do not describe or misdescribe it, and misuse it only in the very thin sense of using it differently for specific purposes, it must be admitted that the philosophers who have devoted their energies to exhibiting how and why metaphysicians do not always abide by the rules of common speech have made it possible to see that metaphysicians do queer things with language. The suggestion which I hope to repudiate is that they do this by mistake, and that what they do cannot be justified in terms of their purposes.

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6. Margaret Macdonald, "Introduction", op. cit., pp. 7 - 8

For I do not believe that metaphysicians are confused about ordinary speech - on the contrary, they are often masters of it. And I do believe that the tricks they play on ordinary language are done for a specific purpose which is not linguistic, not to describe or show how ordinary expressions are actually used.

One of my contentions in what follows will be that metaphysical systems are not intended to be translatable into plain talk, that they lose their point if we try to make this translation, and in this respect we should do better to compare them with poetry rather than philology. It may be more correct to regard metaphysical dispute not as linguistic muddles, but as the result of verbal tricks. The thesis which follows is intended, among other things, to state the difference.

There is, however, a type of current philosophical analysis which seems to me to be very different from the kind which is predominant. I refer to the impartial studies of what metaphysicians do with words, not made in order to show that metaphysicians commit errors, but to show what they might be doing if we do not assume that they are making mistakes or talking rubbish. I call this approach impartial because it does not seem to involve value judgment, it neither praises nor condemns metaphysics, but tries to see it for what it is. This too probably has its origin in Wittgenstein and Moore, but it appears more open-minded and less partisan than many of the views about metaphysics which have developed from those great contemporary thinkers. Indeed, I do not believe that it is accurately described as a <u>philosophical</u> view at all, since it tries to see what philosophers are doing without entering into any dispute about the relative merits of what each does. This is the modern approach which I hope to emulate, although I do not enirely agree with some of the hypotheses that have resulted from it about the nature of metaphysics.

Professor John Wisdom is perhaps the main exponent of this kind of study in England, although he has said some things which may

suggest that he thinks metaphysicians make mistakes as a result of verbal confusion, in which case he would more appropriately be classed with the advocates of ordinary language analyses. He does make remarks, however, which I have in mind as I embark upon this study. For example he has said:

> "Those who say that discussions which are not to be settled by experiment and observation are discussions about words speak wildly - as wildly as one who calls a hat the Taj Mahal. So do those scientists, philosophers or poets who say one cannot stir a flower without troubling of a star. What they say is mad but there's method in it."[7]

> "Philosophers reason for and against their doctrine and in doing so show us not new things but old things anew".[8]

Metaphysics is mad, but there is method in it; I wish to try to answer the question "What method ?", "What is the point of verbal manipulation in metaphysics?"

In the works of other modern philosophers, even those who at other times suggest that metaphysicians are simply mistaken about language, we find illuminating remarks which, if followed up in a study of metaphysical texts, may serve to show that the content of metaphysical statements is not confused, but different, not mistaken, but designed for a special purpose which plain speech could not serve. Dr. Macdonald, for example, sometimes makes such comments: metaphysicians

> "try to operate with ordinary words when they have deprived them of their ordinary functions. They recombine known words in an unfamiliar way while trading on their familiar meanings." [9]

> "When men take an oath, deliver a verdict, recite a creed, utter a curse, or cast a spell, they are using forms of speech much older than those of dispassionate narrative or scientific discourse. For oaths, curses, judgments,incantations,

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7. John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, Blackwell:1953. p. 254
8. ibid., p. 181
9. Margaret Macdonald, "The Philosopher's Use of Analogy", Logic and Language, ed. A.G.N. Flew, (1st Series), Blackwell: 1951. p. 82

> and similar utterances are not designed for the disinterested statement of fact. They exemplify a use of language not as a vehicle of information about nature, but as, itself, one of the powers of nature. The invention of writing and general literacy disguise from us that words are primarily breath, and breath, like steam, can be used as well as escape." [10]

Now although the author of these remarks would probably be quick to point out that the second quotation is taken from a discussion of moral judgments, and not of metaphysics, it may well be that delivering verdicts, reciting creeds, and casting spells are verbal activities more analogous to metaphysical utterances than the language of natural science, dispassionate description, or descriptive philology. It is the recognition that not all language is designed to convey information, to which philosophers often pay lip service but which few take seriously when they discuss metaphysics, that I believe is particularly important for any meta-metaphysical study.

Professor Morris Lazerowitz has advanced a detailed theory about the nature of metaphysics, which exhibits the kind of approach for which I vote. In brief, the theory is that metaphysicians advocate linguistic changes not for the practical purposes of ordinary speech, but in order to put forward, by 'verbal magic', certain irrefutable, non-descriptive conclusions which look as if they are about the nature of the world, but turn out to be illusions or word-dreams.

> "The illusion that things are unknowable in themselves has its source in a linguistic creation". [11]

A metaphysical view presents an illusion, but is neither true nor false. I am not sure that 'illusion' is quite right here, and I am not sure that metaphysical views are simply or even primarily the

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10. Margaret Macdonald, "Ethics and the Ceremonial Use of Language", Philosophical Analysis, ed. Max Black, Cornell University Press: 1950. p. 211

11. Morris Lazerowitz, "Substratum", loc. cit., p. 189

result of word-juggling. It seems that there must be a motive for the verbal manipulation, and I do not believe, as I understand that Professor Lazerowitz does,[12] that it is an unconscious motive. If more attention is paid to the explicit motives of metaphysicians, with which they nearly always begin their books, it may be that the interesting work which has been done on the nature of metaphysical 'verbal magic' can be strengthened by a more plausible answer to the question: "Why do metaphysicians play tricks with words, and how does this relate to the facts which must surely provide the basic material for their views, and to the final effects which they produce ?" And, as I said before, I believe a more plausible, and perhaps also a more pedestrian answer can be given if we do not look at metaphysical texts wearing psycho-analytic blinkers.

There is a difficulty sometimes imputed to meta-philosophy. When one of the subjects studied by philosophy is philosophy itself, it may be said that a philosopher who states that philosophy is X is himself indulging in X while he makes his statement. It then seems as if anything a philosopher says about the nature of philosophy is also applicable to what he says about it. The suggestion is that the meta-philosopher is trapped in a vicious circle. For example, when logical positivists said that philosophical statements are nonsense unless they are verifiable, it is suggested that this statement itself is nonsense on their own terms; the principle of verification is not itself verifiable.

I have tried to avoid this imputation by confining my subject-matter to a few metaphysical theories of the material world. My interest has been to try to understand certain features which they have, and the relation of these features to each other. The main characteristic, I shall argue, is irrefutability by fact or logic, although facts provide some arguments, and logical devices clinch the conclusions which themselves cannot be tested. I do not believe that I have read these features into the views; I think they can

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12. Chiefly from conversations

be observed by anyone who reads the texts with an open mind. I regard my explanation as a possible answer, and not at all as the only possible answer, or even as certainly the right answer, although at the moment I believe it may be right. The claim is that the explanation appears to fit the main characteristics of the Locke-Berkeley dispute, and the dispute inherent in the conflicting views of Alexander and Russell, although I suspect that it may also fit other metaphysical disputes, since metaphysics does have recurring patterns of argumentation. But the study to be made is empirical, and so, of course, may be quite false. It would be false if, for example, the characteristics of metaphysical dispute are not what I describe them to be. On these grounds, the hope and belief is that this thesis is not a metaphysic of metaphysics, but a factual hypothesis designed to explain metaphysics. The data are the texts chosen, and the method is observation, analogy, linguistic analysis conducted without the guidance of pre-determined criteria, and some commonsense guesses.

Many English-speaking philosophers since the early part of this century have been well aware of a striking contrast between philosophical and scientific progress, which becomes more and more apparent as the latter develops and the former continues to involve rediscussions of problems as old as Plato. Philosophers have been forced to compare the methods of science, which seem so successful, with the methods of metaphysics which seem, at least in terms of discovering new things about the world, so unsuccessful. This kind of comparison is perhaps the most responsible for the fact that in current philosophy 'metaphysical' is almost a term of abuse.

Although it is I think true that the methods and results of metaphysics are very different from those of science, as I shall try to show, it may be that it is absurd to make the comparison at all, as it would be to compare Milton's Paradise Lost with historical accounts. To this extent perhaps the following study is a vindication of metaphysics, and to this extent perhaps I am not impartial. Yet

while admitting that I feel metaphysics must have as much right to exist as science, for very different reasons, I would not presume to sing the praises of metaphysics; I wish only to understand the appeal it still has for many intelligent people, and why and how it produces the effects it does.

It is well to explain here some liberties which will be taken in subsequent chapters:

(i) I have used the words 'metaphysics' and 'philosophy' almost interchangeably, and also the words 'metaphysician' and 'philosopher'. While I realise that all metaphysicians are philosophers but not all philosophers are metaphysicians, for the sake of stylistic variety metaphysicians will sometimes be called 'philosophers'.

While no one, presumably, would take exception to calling Alexander a metaphysician, many, including himself, may object to calling Russell one. My defence is that the particular theory of Russell's studied here does seem to be a metaphysical theory. Surely if it is permissable to call Berkeley's view that material things are really groups of 'ideas' metaphysical, it is also permissable to apply this label to Russell's view that material things are really series of 'sense-data'. Russell constantly insists that he is <u>not</u> a metaphysician. Berkeley would probably have done the same had he lived in this age when 'metaphysician' is almost a rude word. I do not use this term emotively. Any philosopher who has put forward a view which purports to describe the ultimate or basic constitution of material things will be called, in so far as he does this, a metaphysician, and in no way should this be considered reproachful.

(ii) The word 'dispute' is not used strictly, e.g. by "Locke and Berkeley disputed" I do not mean, of course, that they actually did quarrel with each other, but that they undoubtedly would have done, had chronology made it physically possible. The Locke-

Berkeley dispute is presented as an attack by Berkeley on views put forward by Locke, which indeed it was, and calling it a 'dispute' is intended only to draw attention to the fact that their two theories are, in some sense, incompatible with each other, yet urged with equal determination. Similarly, I go on to talk about "the dispute between Alexander and Russell", although, as far as I have been able to find out, there was no actual dispute which took place between them either. Indeed, Russell once remarked that he hoped and believed his position was not remote from Professor Alexander's.[13] His reference, however, was to one of Alexander's "less metaphysical" articles, and not to Space,Time and Deity, which, I may be forgiven for suspecting, Russell probably never read. Alexander, for his part, plainly believed that his position was opposed to Russell's.[14] By calling the two views taken together a 'dispute', all I mean again is that they are, in a sense to be determined, incompatible, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that, given occasion, their respective authors would have disputed.

(iii) I may be accused of having assumed in this thesis that Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding and Russell's Our Knowledge of the External World, in spite of their titles, produce theories about the nature of the external world and not purely epistemological theories. My defence here is that although these books are originally concerned with describing our sense-knowledge, their final contributions do propose theories that the world is

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13. See Bertrand Russell, "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter", Mysticism and Logic, Pelican Books: 1953. p. 120
His reference is to Alexander's "The Basis of Realism"

14. See Samuel Alexander, Space,Time and Deity, Macmillan: 1920. Vol. II, p. 196:
"The real thing is not the 'class of perspectives' in the language of Mr. Russell .." etc.

really unknown substance, or really logically constructed from our sense-data, respectively. This point will be exhibited, I hope, in the relevant expositions.

The following procedure will be adopted. First, I shall discuss the Locke-Berkeley dispute about abstract ideas, and the dispute about the ultimate nature of the material world with which it is so closely bound up. In Chapter Four I shall state what seem to be its puzzling features, and offer a preliminary and tentative suggestion to make these characteristics explicable. Next, a study will be made of specific views held by Alexander and Russell about the ultimate nature of the external world, and again some features which seem to demand explanation will be highlighted. Both these philosophers claim that their methods are 'scientific', and the significance of this will be discussed in Chapter Seven. I shall then go on to examine the suspicion that the Locke-Berkeley dispute is persistent, and that the issues which were at stake between them can still be detected in twentieth-century disputation. This involves a comparison of the Locke-Berkeley dispute with the views of Alexander and Russell, and a study of some contemporary forms of phenomenalism. Finally, the last two chapters of the thesis will be devoted to offering in some detail a few suggestions about how the characteristics of metaphysical disputation, noted during the course of the study, might be plausibly explained.

CHAPTER TWO

BERKELEY'S ATTACK ON ABSTRACT IDEAS

"I readily agree with this learned author, that the faculties of brutes can by no means attain to abstraction. But then if this be made the distinguishing property of that sort of animals, I fear a great many of those that pass for men must be reckoned into their number." [1]

1. The Works of George Berkeley, ed. Luce & Jessop, Nelson: 1948. Vol. II, pp. 30-31 (PRINCIPLES, para. 11)

Locke commented that although every thing which exists is a particular thing, general words far outnumber particular words in the language which we use to speak about what exists. This, he believed, is a matter of convenience, for "it is beyond the power of human capacity to frame and retain distinct ideas of all the particular things we meet with." [2] It would be impossible to communicate in the way we do without the aid of those words which do not directly stand for particular things. Words like 'triangularity', Locke recognised, are indispensable. He went on to ask, how do we come to use general terms, when every thing which we experience is particular ? His answer provides the doctrine of abstract ideas:

> "Words become general by being made the signs of general ideas; and ideas become general by separating from them the circumstances of time and place, and any other ideas that may determine them to this or that particular existence."[3]

It sounds as if Locke is investing our minds with a new kind of entity, a sort of general image, an entity which is neither a particular thought nor a sense-impression. It almost sounds as if he is saying that some such general mental entity exists, like an after-image, for us to study and observe. This impression he dispels when he adds these two comments:

> "And he that thinks 'general natures' or 'notions' are anything else but such abstract and partial ideas of more complex ones, taken at first from particular existences, will, I fear, be at a loss where to find them," [4]

> "It is plain .. that 'general' and 'universal' belong not to the real existence of things; but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its use, and concern only signs, whether words or ideas. Words

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2. Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. A.C. Fraser, Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1894. Vol. II, p. 14 (Bk. III, Ch. 3)

3. ibid., pp. 16-17 (Bk. III, Ch. 3)

4. ibid., p. 18 (Bk. III, Ch. 3)

> are general .. when used for signs of general ideas, and so are applicable indifferently to many particular things; and ideas are general when they are set up as representatives of many particular things." [5]

These two quotations do, I think, make it clear that Locke did not intend by "general abstract idea" any particular existent, comparable to a mental image, not even a sort of composite or generic image like the confused result of taking several photographs on the same film. For example, the idea of triangularity would be representative of, and abstracted from, particular ideas of triangles. To think about triangularity, rather than about this particular triangle, would be to "have a general abstract idea". It is evident that we can have images of particular triangles, but not of triangularity. Yet we can think about triangularity, and this does not entail that we must have an image of it. On Locke's view the idea of triangularity is representative of particular triangles, and the word 'triangularity' which stands for the "abstract idea" is so indirectly applicable to particular triangles. Locke does not suggest in these passages that an abstract idea is anything like a particular idea, or a sense-datum. On the contrary, while particular ideas are "given" in experience, abstract ideas are "creatures of the understanding", devices invented for our own purposes of communication.

Berkeley, however, is aroused by this doctrine into strong opposition. It is, he thinks, a linguistic abuse to hold the opinion "that the mind hath the power of framing 'abstract ideas' or notions of things." [6] This opinion, he tells us, rests on a linguistic misunderstanding about the function of general words; yet his first arguments against Locke's view appeal to psychological fact. The reader has the impression that Berkeley attacks

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5. ibid., p. 21 (Bk. III, Ch. 3)

6. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 27 (PRINCIPLES, para. 6)

Locke's doctrine on the grounds that it misdescribes the mental processes involved in abstract thinking. He points out, for example, the ways in which he finds himself able to abstract and the ways in which he does not:

> "I can consider the hand, the eye, the nose, each by itself abstracted or separated from the rest of the body. But then whatever hand or eye I imagine, it must have some particular shape and colour ... And there are grounds to think most men will acknowledge themselves to be in my case." [7]

The thought comes to mind that Locke would have agreed with Berkeley that it is impossible to imagine a hand or an eye with no particular shape or colour. Yet by agreeing, Locke would not have renounced his own view. For, of course, he could, and probably would, have said that when we think of hands or eyes in general, we do not think of all the particular shapes and shades they have, but neither do we imagine something which has no shape or colour. In order to hold his view about abstract ideas, Locke need only assert, for example, that when anatomy students think about 'the hand' or 'the eye' they are abstracting, not thinking about any particular hands or eyes. This does not entail that the anatomy student has a peculiar general image in his mind, but it would entail for Locke that he had formed an "abstract idea". Similarly, when I say "Hands are a guide to character", Locke could on his own terms claim that I was having abstract ideas, but not mental images.

Berkeley, however, does not consider this possible and apparently legitimate interpretation of Locke's view. It is quite clear as soon as he talks about imagining a hand with no particular shape or colour that he intends to infer that Locke claimed that abstract ideas were a peculiar, esoteric species of particular ideas. His excuse for this interpretation lies in Locke's very confused passage about the abstract idea of Triangle. He seizes upon this description and exploits it to the detriment of Locke's clearer statements, e.g. those quoted

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7. ibid., pp. 29 - 30 (PRINCIPLES, para. 10)

above. The entry he made in his notebook leaves no doubt about his intentions:

> "Mem: to bring the killing blow at the last v.g. in the matter of Abstraction to bring Locke's general triangle at the last." [8]

He delivers the killing blow this way:

> "All I desire is, that the reader would fully and certainly inform himself whether he has such an idea or no. And this, methinks, can be no hard task for anyone to perform. What more easy than for any one to look a little into his own thoughts, and there try whether he has, or can attain to have, an idea which shall correspond with the description that is here given of the general idea of a triangle, which is, 'neither oblique nor rectangle, equilateral, equicrural, nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once' ? " [9]

There is no doubt that taken out of context the description of the abstract idea of a triangle which Berkeley quotes from Locke suggests that it is meant to be something which possesses, but also does not possess, all the mutually incompatible qualities of all actual and possible triangles. Yet Locke's other comment, that abstract ideas are set up as representatives of particular things, suggests that he thought of an abstract idea as a sort of shorthand symbol and not as a mental entity with inconsistent properties.

Now Berkeley asked us to introspect, to conduct a psychological experiment, in order to discover whether we have, or can conjure up, an idea which will correspond with Locke's description of the abstract idea of Tràangle. This request is not intended to amount to anything as pedestràan as "See if you know what 'triangularity' means." It would not be considered a successful report on the results of the introspective experiment to say: "Yes, I do have

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8. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 84 (Entry 687:"Philosophical Commentaries")

9. ibid., Vol. II, p. 33 (PRINCIPLES, para. 13)

an abstract idea of triangularity. I can deduce conclusions about any triangle whatever without reference to any particular example of a triangle. I can think about three-sided plane figures in general without observing any instances of them."
This answer would not be accepted by Berkeley since he himself admits:

> "a man may consider a figure merely as triangular, without attending to the particular qualities of the angles, or the relations of the sides ... So far he may abstract: but this will never prove, that he can frame an abstract general inconsistent idea of a triangle." 10

It seems that the strength of Berkeley's attack lies in this phrase - "inconsistent idea of a triangle". He has asked us to introspect in order to look for something which it is logically impossible we should find. It is not merely difficult to conjure up the abstract idea which Berkeley asks us to attempt to form, as, for example, it would be difficult to conjure up an image of a hectagon. When Berkeley says that the attempt to picture a general triangle is no hard task for anyone to perform, it is no hard task in the sense that we need not even trouble to conduct the experiment in order to conclude that we never could have such a mental image. Berkeley's instructions turn out to be like "Introspect and see if you can picture a round square." Introspection, of course, is completely unnecessary in order to know that no possible image will be found to correspond to the phrase "round square".

On Berkeley's interpretation of Locke's view, then, "an anstract idea exists" appears not merely false, but self-contradictory. "Abstract idea" is taken to denote something inconsistent. Berkeley is able to say:

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10. ibid., Vol. II, p. 35 (PRINCIPLES, para. 16)

> "Is it not a hard thing to imagine, that a couple of children cannot prate together, of their sugar-plumbs and rattles and the rest of their little trinkets, till they have first tacked together numberless inconsistencies, and so framed in their minds abstract general ideas ?" [11]

In short, "abstract idea" is taken to mean "mental image of something self-contradictory".

An odd feature of the Locke-Berkeley disagreement about abstract ideas has been brought out by Professor Mace:

> "It is clear, of course, that the issue does not turn on any differences in the constitutions of Locke and Berkeley, or on any differences in what was open to their observation when they considered what happened to them when they thought of a man or a triangle. Berkeley obviously had his tongue in his cheek when he pretended that Locke might have some peculiar faculty which he himself lacked. He was in fact quite sure that Locke could not think of the nondescript triangle any more than he could; and what Locke thought he could think of he had every reason for supposing that Berkeley could too." [12]

It is all perhaps even more odd than Professor Mace suggests. Both Locke and Berkeley agree that general words have functions which are dissimilar from the functions of particular terms. Both agree that general words are used to talk about particular things in a general way. Both recognise and state the fact that we can and do think of triangularity or mankind without bearing in mind particular instances. Both agree that we have sense-experience of particular things, and also abstract from it. I shall try to show this in more detail.

It is not clear that Berkeley's account of the function of general words in our language differs from Locke's. Locke said:

> "words are general .. when used for signs of general ideas, and so are applicable indifferently to many particular things: and ideas are general when they are set up as representatives of many particular things." [13]

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11. ibid., Vol. II, p. 33 (PRINCIPLES, para. 14)

12. C.A. Mace, "Introspection and Analysis", Philosophical Analysis, ed. Max Black, Cornell University Press: 1950. p. 237

13. Locke, op. cit., p. 21 (Bk. III, Ch. 3)

Berkeley rejects this as linguistic misunderstanding, and substitutes:

> "But it seems a word becomes general by being made the sign, not of an abstract general idea, but of several particular ideas, any of which it indifferently suggests to the mind." 14

On Locke's account general words stand for abstract ideas which in turn stand for particular ideas; Berkeley retorts that general words stand for particular ideas. This is not so different as it sounds. For Locke admits that general ideas represent particular ideas, and Berkeley admits that general words, although he insists they do not stand for abstract ideas, have connotations as well as denotations, e.g. that we can prove theorems about triangles without proving their applicability to some particular triangle.

The disagreement between Locke and Berkeley is not a disagreement about the way in which general words function. They both admit that general words both denote (particular ideas) and connote (have single definitions). Nor is it a dispute about the psychology of the matter, for, as Professor Mace said, the psychological facts are the same for both philosophers, and Locke clearly did not claim that he could form a general image, any more than Berkeley did. The disagreement between them is in Berkeley's rejection of Locke's intermediary, the abstract idea for which a general word is said to stand, which in turn stands for particular things, but for which Berkeley insists the general word itself stands.

The explanation of this disagreement is clear if we pay attention to the different uses given to the term 'idea' by Locke and Berkeley. Locke meant by 'idea' "Whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks." [15] There is some ambiguity in Berkeley's stated use of the term, but his subsequent arguments, his previous discussion of abstract ideas, and the reliable opinion of Professor

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14. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 31 (PRINCIPLES, para. 11)

15. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 32 (Introduction)

Jessop make it clear that "Berkeley always means by 'idea' a sensory object".[16] Locke, of course, did not always mean by 'idea' some sensory object, he used it for any object of thought whatever, sensory or non-sensory.

With this difference of philosophical usage in mind, I believe we can begin to make sense of the abstract ideas dispute. As a result of Berkeley's redefinition of 'idea', anything which is an idea is either a percept or an image. On his terms 'idea' is inapplicable to anything which is neither of these. So with regard to Locke's phrase 'abstract idea', it is easy for him to declare that it is self-contradictory - a contradiction in terms - for percepts and images are not abstract, and ideas must be one of the two.

I think it is quite evident that Berkeley ignores Locke's philosophical usage and insists upon his own. Consider his remark:

> "'Tis one thing for to keep a name constantly to the same definition, and another to make it stand everywhere for the same idea: the one is necessary, the other useless and impracticable." [17]

Now the way Locke uses the word 'idea' does not exclude the possibility of saying that a definition of a general word stands for an abstract idea. But the way Berkeley uses it does of course result in this being nonsense. When Berkeley comments that it would be "useless and impracticable" to make a name stand everywhere for the same idea, he is making it clear that he will not count a general definition as referring to an 'idea'.

Berkeley considered it to be an argument against Locke's view that we cannot imagine a hand without also imagining a hand of some specific shape and colour. It would be an argument only if Locke intended to affirm that an abstract idea is the sort of thing we can picture. Locke's use of idea does not suggest that an abstract idea

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16. T.E. Jessop, in a footnote, The Works of George Berkeley, Vol. II, p. 41

17. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 36 (PRINCIPLES, para. 18)

is like an image, but Berkeley's use suggests that it must be.

Berkeley's statement that he has shown the impossibility of abstract ideas[18] is in a sense quite true. He has shown that the phrase 'abstract idea' is a contradiction-in-terms according to his own redefinition of the term 'idea'. But of course this does not mean to say that he has refuted Locke, in whose system 'idea' is not given the narrow sense by which 'abstract idea' is rendered self-contradictory.

However, Berkeley himself claimed that he had shown that Locke's view rested on a linguistic mistake, and it is common in modern philosophy to share his opinion.[19] So more needs to be said in an attempt to show that no linguistic mistake is involved in either theory. Locke would claim that in the sentence "Mankind is mortal", the word 'Mankind' stands for an abstract idea of mankind, which represents all men, dead, alive, or to be born. It may not be illuminating to say that 'Mankind' stands for mankind, but it is true if trivial. It is no more illuminating, but equally true, to say that 'Mankind' stands for an abstraction, i.e. mankind. How can these statements, which are all that Locke's theory claims in the way of linguistic facts, i.e. that general words have connotations, be linguistic mistakes ? The answer frequently urged is that the mistake consists in supposing that general words are names, that words like 'Mankind' stand for entities just as 'John' stands for a specific person. I have never been able to see how Locke can be accused of saying that general words function in relation to abstract ideas as proper names function in relation to individual people. Locke made it very clear that while general words stand for abstract ideas, those abstract ideas relate to particular ideas; this surely is not to treat general words as if they were the names of specific things.

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18. See ibid., Vol. II, p. 38 (PRINCIPLES. para. 21)

19. See, for example, G.J. Warnock, Berkeley, Pelican Books: 1953. pp. 83 seq.

This is not the only point which seems to tell against the philosophers who urge with distressing frequency that the doctrine of abstract ideas, or the theory of universals, results from a simple linguistic slip of supposing that words like 'democracy' or 'triangularity' have the same function as words like 'Peter' or 'Piccadilly'. Both Locke and Berkeley realised equally well that general words function differently from particular words. Both realised that words like 'triangularity' etc. connote e.g. the property possessed by any three-sided plane figure and denote e.g. any particular drawing of a triangle. If Locke emphasised the similarity of general words to particular words, while realising how in fact they differ, and Berkeley emphasised the dissimilarity of the two kinds of term, while realising how they are similar, what grounds could we have for choosing between their views ? The linguistic grounds we might have had, e.g. that general words do in the final analysis refer to any of a group of particular things, are neither ignored nor denied by either theory.

Whichever view we choose - "General words refer to abstract ideas" or "General words refer indirectly to any of a group of particular things" - will not affect the way in which we normally use words. Neither view is incompatible with ordinary usage. 'Triangularity' will mean the same, be used correctly on the same occasions, whether we believe it connotes and abstract idea or denotes many particular ones. For the truth is that it does both, as far as we can judge from the linguistic facts themselves. In this way the theories have nothing to do with correct speech. Both Locke and Berkeley use the word 'triangle' correctly, to refer to a three-sided plane figure, and neither of them suggests a new usage for it, e.g. to refer to some other sort of figure.

When Berkeley refuses to accept Locke's definition of 'idea', and substitutes his own restricted sense of the word, he does not offend against ordinary language. For it cannot be stressed too often that 'idea' is a technical philosophical term, invented for metaphysical purposes, and not a word given a dictionary sense.

Berkeley changes not ordinary but philosophical language in order to be able to state that abstract ideas are logically impossible. His recommendations are not concerned with how we daily talk, but with the way in which we interpret the philosophical import of our normal use. So it is not the actual use of general words which is disputed, but what that use implies.

In other words, Berkeley's attempt to persuade us that "abstract ideas" are self-contradictory, fictions resulting from linguistic misunderstanding, has no bearing on our ordinary speech. Nor, of course, has Locke's reification of connotations into abstract ideas. Nevertheless, both metaphysicians sincerely believe that they are describing the actual function of general words in our language. To a certain extent they are: neither denies anything about our ordinary use of these words, and both emphasise a certain aspect of it. Locke emphasises that general terms refer to the common meaning of those particular terms with which they are connected, while Berkeley emphasises that they refer to those particular terms themselves. But this is only half the story.

It would be wrong to say that Berkeley's attack on abstract ideas is simply a change of linguistic emphasis, an underlining of a point about general words which Locke did not stress. There is much more to it. Berkeley is concerned to show that Locke's view is not merely a linguistic mistake, a failure to note a point of logical grammar, but a piece of <u>self-contradictory</u> nonsense.

For the sake of fresh illustration, let us suppose that someone says that negative facts exist, e.g. that the fact that this pencil is not blue <u>exists</u> just as much as the fact that it is red <u>exists</u>. A routine objection would be that "This pencil is not blue" does not describe a funny sort of fact - a negative one - but indirectly points out a positive fact, namely that the pencil is red. A dispute is then generated, with a typical pattern. One person emphasises that we can know the truth of "This pencil is not blue" without knowing that it is red - e.g. in the dark when we know that no blue pencil is in the room, but cannot remember what colour the pencils

in the room are. To him this emphasis seems to suggest that it is right to say that negative facts exist, since they can be known when the corresponding positive fact is unknown. To another person talk about "negative facts" will sound extravagent, "metaphysical" in the disparaging sense, and absurd. He will point out that experience does not contain situations of not-blueness, only of red, or that "This pencil is not blue" does not describe a state of affairs, but rather the absence of a state of affairs, that it does not assert a fact, but denies a fact, etc. Now suppose the person who feels that the way in which we make negative statements does not suggest that there are negative facts goes on to claim that it is self-contradictory, or nonsense, to speak of negative facts. This would surely be a sign that the dispute had ceased to be a question of making different emphases, and had become one couched in a priori terms, not properly disputable by talking about facts at all.

By asserting that the doctrine of abstract ideas is not merely false, not merely a linguistic confusion, but self-contradictory, Berkeley's line of argument becomes logically fortified against any argument from the facts, or from interpretations of the facts. Berkeley builds an impregnable fortressed position against complaints. It is impregnable because his own definition of the word 'idea' renders Locke's theory without doubt self-contradictory. We can, of course, refuse to accept his definition, and then Locke's view is not self-contradictory. But since Berkeley does not deny any common linguistic fact about general words, by refusing to accept his definition we have not refuted his view, his own position remains unassailed. So, of course, does Locke's. We can refuse to agree with Locke that the fact general terms have connotations implies that there are abstract ideas. But if we do this, there is no fact about ordinary language which will serve to back us up, no truth which Locke has denied, and no way of refuting him by reference to a commonly accepted principle of language or psychology. For there is no established linguistic or psychological fact, and no common assumption, which Locke denies by advancing his theory about abstract ideas.

It may sound, if this is right, as if Locke and Berkeley were simply talking at cross purposes, using the same word but giving it different meanings, like the people who argue whether a bank is grassy, where one has the rustic and the other the monetary sense of the word in mind. But this is not what the Locke-Berkeley dispute is like, because we cannot reasonably imagine that Berkeley was unaware of Locke's definition of 'idea'. Berkeley does not, it seems, misunderstand Locke when he discusses the abstract ideas theory by redefining Locke's word 'idea'. It is more probable that Berkeley's redefinition is deliberate. This is plausible in view of Berkeley's motive for his attack on abstract ideas, which is to prepare the ground for an attack on Substance. By restricting the wider use of the word 'idea', and substituting his own confined use, Berkeley manages to argue convincingly not only that abstract ideas are logically impossible, but by implication that nothing exists in the material world which is not sensory. Indeed, the restriction on the applicability of 'idea' is Berkeley's sharpest tool for carving his own metaphysical system. His re-reading of Locke's intentions is quite natural; his interest was not to edit or evaluate Locke's view, but to dispel it, disprove it, banish it from consideration, so that he could express his own metaphysical attitude in his own system.

This seems evident in view of the fact that Berkeley's own analysis of the function of general words is not as thorough-going as we would expect from his pronouncements in the Introduction to the Principles. It seems that the assertion which claimed that all general words are the signs of several particular ideas is intended to apply only to those general words which have a sensory connotation, e.g. 'motion', 'colour', 'triangularity', 'man', etc. General words like 'force', 'grace', 'spirits', and all those things of which Berkeley declares we have notions rather than ideas are not accounted for in the same manner.[20] The view about the function of general words

20. See, for example, Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 289-293 ("Seventh Dialogue", Alciphron or The Minute Philosopher). Especially p. 292: "..words may be significant, although they do not stand for ideas."

put forward in the Introduction to the Principles, then, seems to be primarily a preliminary attack on Locke's doctrine of Substance, which of course depends on Locke's other doctrine that general words for sensory things are signs for abstract ideas developed from experience, and not signs directly signifying items of experience.

To say that Berkeley attacks Locke's view about abstract ideas in order to prepare the way for his own metaphysics is not intended to suggest that he was insincere, or sinning against any canons of intellectual honesty. Obviously Berkeley believed that abstract ideas are logically impossible, and was not directly aware that they are so only as a result of his redefinition of 'idea'. Obviously he also believed, in spite of his proof that they are self-contradictory, that there were arguments from introspection and from ordinary usage which established that they do not as a matter of fact exist. He did not distinguish between the falsity of a statement and its inconsistency. It did not seem odd to him, as it does to most modern philosophers, to disprove by a logical device that X can exist, and then go on to show that as a matter of empirical fact X does not exist.

These remarks, I hope, will give some notion of the features of the metaphysical dispute which I believe call for explanation. In mathematics it would be most eccentric to appeal to the nature of particular examples of triangles in order to show that they cannot have four sides. In metaphysics it is common to exhibit a statement as inconsistent before appealing to matter of fact to establish that what it claims does not happen to exist. Also, it seems that the rival views about abstract ideas are equally untestable, their conclusions a priori true in the sense that no conceivable appeal to any fact or common belief, about what we can conjure up in our minds or about our use of general terms, will serve to provide a conclusive refutation. Finally, Berkeley's attack on Locke rests upon his redefinition of the central term of

their dispute, and cannot plausibly be called an impartial criticism of the doctrine of abstract ideas. All these points call for further explanation.

Before offering an explanation in any detail, I shall try to see whether the same features are evident in the main dispute of which this is a preliminary skirmish; namely in the Locke-Berkeley dispute about Substance.

A further consideration of the abstract ideas dispute will be made in Chapter Ten of this thesis, when more material has been studied, and it can be seen as an integral part of the two metaphysical systems.

CHAPTER THREE

BERKELEY'S ATTACK ON SUBSTANCE

"I may cut into a Christmas pudding
and may chance to find a sixpence,
but I shall not find Matter." [1]

1. A.A. Luce, Berkeley's Immaterialism, Nelson: 1945. p. 44

Since the idea of Substance is an example of what Locke meant by an abstract idea, Berkeley, who began his attack on Locke by establishing the impossibility of abstract ideas, might well have been satisfied that he had ipso facto established the impossibility of Substance. However, it is by devoting detailed argument specifically to 'disproving' the existence and possibility of Substance that he creates his own account of the nature of the external world. It is an account which has never ceased to excite philosophers.

This Chapter will be sub-divided into an exposition of Locke's account of Substance, a description of Berkeley's attack on it, and an imaginary dialogue designed to bring out a point about their dispute which puzzles me - its irresolvability. Finally, in the following Chapter, some preliminary suggestions for explaining the puzzle will be made.

Locke's Account

Locke states in his preface to the Essay that he intends to map out the limits of certain and probable knowledge. In this way he aims to banish from consideration those problems which arise when the human mind grapples with matters beyond its comprehension. If we can clearly distinguish between soluble and insoluble problems, Locke hopes, "we may learn to content ourselves with what is attainable by us in this state".[2] It is, I think, evident from the beginning of Locke's work that his conclusion will assert that there are some unknowable things in the world.

Locke's first step in describing our knowledge of the external world is to declare that an 'idea', or "whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks",[3] originates either from observations of "external sensible objects", or from observation of "the internal operations of our mind".[4] An idea does not, and cannot,

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2. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 29 (Introduction)

3. ibid., p. 32 (Introduction)

4. ibid., p. 122 (Bk. II, Ch. 1)

originate in any other way.

Locke describes the mind as originally 'empty', and its first tenants as "simple ideas of sensation" conveyed in by the five senses. Among these simple ideas of sense we come to notice certain recurring patterns, certain groups of ideas frequently co-exist, and to these groups we give single physical-object names.[5] For example, simple ideas of redness, shininess, roundness, sweetness, juiciness, etc., recur in ordered patterns to which we give the name 'apple'.

So far, Berkeley would not disagree. Locke, however, goes on to ask what keeps these discrete simple ideas of sensation together, and why they occur in patterns and not at haphazard random. The mind, says Locke, cannot make any sense of the groupings of its simple ideas of sense unless it assumes that something holds them together and causes them to occur in the way they do.

> ".. not imagining how these simple ideas <u>can</u> subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some <u>substratum</u> wherein they do subsist and from which they do result, which therefore we call <u>substance</u>." [6]

That we do in fact suppose that "some substratum" must account for the pattern of our sense-experience, Locke claims, is made evident by the way in which we habitually assert propositions in subject-predicate form. We say, for example, "<u>This</u> is white", and 'this' seems to refer to something other than the predicates we ascribe to <u>it</u>. The thought is, there must be something <u>which is</u> both snow and white, if we are to analyse "The snow is white". It leads Locke to conclude that the subject-terms of statements about material things must refer to something which underlies the sensory qualities of those things:

> "These, and the like fashions of speaking, intimate that the substance is supposed always <u>something besides</u> the extension, figure, solidity .. or other observable ideas, though we know not what it is." [7]

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5. See <u>ibid.</u>, p. 390 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)
6. <u>ibid.</u>,pp. 390-391 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)
7. <u>ibid.</u>, p. 394 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)

So far, whatever we think of it, Locke's view is clear. Now ambiguities and complications follow. In this thesis it would be out of place to indulge in a lengthy discussion of "what Locke really meant". But it is necessary to note the main complications of his system in so far as they affect the doctrine of Substance.

Substance is not simply the support and cause which we assume holds together and produces our simple sense-data, although we know not what it is. Somehow 'in it' are primary qualities. Locke held that while secondary qualities, (colours, temperatures, textures, etc), are merely 'ideas in the mind', they have external counterparts which are mind-independent primary qualities, (extensions, motions, amounts, etc.) These primary qualities are given a status in the material world which is denied to secondary qualities:

> "The particular bulk, number, figure, and motion of the parts of fire or snow are really in them, - whether anyone's senses perceive them or no." [8]

Did Locke mean that the primary qualities which we experience are 'really in' external objects, or did he mean that external objects really have a shape, a size, etc., rather than those specific shapes and sizes we see they have ? Did Locke mean that the window frame really has some shape or other, while it is not really coloured, or did he mean that the window frame really is square, while it is not really brown ? There is no pressing need to reach a conclusion here. It is sufficient to note that Berkeley pointed out that the arguments used by Locke to show that secondary qualities are mind-dependent ideas can also be used to show that primary qualities are. This suggests that Berkeley thought Locke was claiming that those primary qualities we see and touch are really in external objects. On the other hand, if someone wishes to argue, as many do, that Locke meant to say that the externally real primary qualities are not identical with those we see and touch,[9] Berkeley has another argument to bring against him,

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8. ibid., p. 174 (Bk. II, Ch. 8)

9. See R.I. Aaron, John Locke, Clarendon Press, Oxford; 1955 (2nd Edition). pp. 126-127: for a discussion of the ambiguity, i.e. whether Locke meant the primary qualities in substance to be determinates or determinables.

namely that a size of no particular size, etc., has all the faults which he attributes to the doctrine of abstract ideas.

Another complication of Locke's account is his view that the combination of primary qualities as they exist in Substance generates 'powers' which cause our sense-data. This makes it clear that Substance is intended to be not only a logical explanation of accidents, suggested by the subject-predicate form of propositions, but also a physical causal agent, suggested by the notions of contemporary physics.

> "The idea of heat or light, which we perceive by our eyes, or touch, from the sun, are commonly thought real qualities in the sun, and something more than mere powers in it. But when we consider the sun in reference to wax, which it melts or blanches, we look on the whiteness or softness produced in the wax, not as qualities in the sun, but effects produced by powers in it .. these qualities of light and warmth, which are perceptions in me .. are no otherwise in the sun than the changes made in the wax ... They are all of them equally powers in the sun, depending on its primary qualities.."
>
> "Powers therefore justly make a great part of our complex ideas of substances". [10]

In the previous chapter I pointed out Berkeley's habit of mixing an empirical with an a priori style when he attacked Locke's doctrine of abstract ideas. This mixed style, which gives to the view it expresses an apparent relevance to familiar fact together with an apparent logical certainty, is also typical of Locke's account of Substance. It seems from his text that Locke means to conclude both that the unperceived substance is unknowable, beyond the range of human cognition, and also as a matter of fact unknown, might become known if stronger perceptual equipment were available. For Locke says, on one hand:

> ".. it seems probable to me, that the simple ideas we receive from sensation and reflection are the boundaries of our thoughts, beyond which the mind, whatever efforts it would make, is not able to advance one jot; nor can it make any discoveries, when it would pry into the nature and hidden causes of those ideas." [11]

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10. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 400 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)

11. ibid., p. 415 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)

But Locke also says:

> "Had we senses acute enough to discern the minute particles of bodies, and the real constitution on which their sensible qualities depend, I doubt not but they would produce quite different ideas in us: and that which is now the yellow colour of gold, would then disappear, and instead of it we should see an admirable texture of parts, of a certain size figure." [12]

Locke speaks with two voices. One is in the grand metaphysical manner, putting forward a priori that Substance is a Secret Entity behind the sensory scene which no amount of prying can reveal.[13] The other is in the scientific manner, suggesting, with some excitement, that the scientist with his "microscopical eyes"[14] might one day detect the hidden features of gold, or at least of its primary qualities.

But a difficulty arises if we take Locke's scientific tones too seriously. It is a difficulty which Berkeley seized upon to his own advantage. If Substance is merely as a matter of fact unknown, and could within the realm of logical possibility become known, this entails that it might be possible for us to know it by looking, by having simple ideas of sense, even if we have them as a result of looking through some powerful instrument or at some electronic screen. Then, of course, Substance would turn out to be just another group of simple ideas, since, by Locke's definition, whatever we see is a group of simple ideas. This definition makes it logically impossible to know Substance by any form of sense-experience, since whatever is sense-experienced has an underlying substratum. If we claim to perceive Substance, we need to postulate another Substance to account for what we perceive, and so on ad infinitum. Locke's scientific excitement, on these grounds, is not really scientific, and if he were a physicist instead of a metaphysician, we should be tempted to call it phoney.

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12. ibid., p. 401 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)
13. see ibid., p. 403, (Bk. II, Ch. 23), where he speaks of the 'secret' nature of Substance
14. see ibid., p. 403 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)

When the Bishop of Worcester in his famous letter accused Locke of "almost discarding Substance out of the reasonable part of the world", (Berkeley's accusation made more charitable), Locke referred him to the passage in which he had said that while he possessed no clear notion of what Substance is, he did know (roughly) what it does.[15] This indicates that Locke considered the importance of his postulation of Substance was that it somehow accounted for the co-occurrence and ordered pattern of simple ideas of sensation. Starting from the premiss that knowledge of the external world consists basically of discrete sense-data, Locke felt it necessary to explain why the world we know is one of material objects, and not of haphazard sensory items. He felt it was so necessary to accommodate the commonsense belief that we live among physical objects, without giving up his view that knowledge of the external world consists of discrete experiences, that he asserted with astonishing confidence:

> ".. and it is past doubt, there must be some real constitution, on which any collection of simple ideas co-existing must depend." [16]

Berkeley's Attack

In general, Berkeley's attack on Locke's theory of Substance is a revolt against the distinction between appearance and reality made by Locke. He was out to prove that real things in the external world fall completely within the purview of the senses, that the material world and our experience of the material world are one and the same. Just as he retorted that abstract words like 'triangularity' do not refer to anything other than concrete particular triangles, so he retorts that 'the real world' does not refer to anything other than concrete particular sense-experiences.

15. See Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 230 (the passage referred to is Bk. II, Ch. 13, para. 19)

16. ibid., Vol. II, p. 26 (Bk. III, Ch. 3) Further discussion of the assumption that the world consists of discrete sense-items will be undertaken in Chapter Four of this thesis.

This is the overt crux of the Locke-Berkeley dispute about the external world. Overtly, it is a disagreement about the nature of things like cherries and trees, Locke contending that the real cherry is the unknown cause of the cherry we know from experience, Berkeley retorting that the real cherry is no more than the sum of its sensory characteristics. But this is oversimplification, as I shall try to show.

Berkeley arrives at his conclusion, apparently at least, and in his own terms, by exhibiting Locke's theory as an untenable piece of rubbish. This he seems to do by establishing a priori that nothing can exist in the material world which is not perceived.

In the first few paragraphs of his Principles, as I noted in the last chapter, Berkeley makes sure what his reader is to mean by the contemporary philosophical term 'idea'. The word will be used to refer, he insists, only to sensory objects, to percepts and images. It is interesting that Berkeley should explain his use of the term after his attack on abstract ideas. If he had done this in his Introduction, instead of at the beginning of Part I, I believe it would have been immediately clear that in attacking the doctrine of abstract ideas he was substituting a restricted use of the word 'idea', and reserving the word 'notion' to cover much of what Locke meant by 'idea'.

Berkeley states, at the start of his attack on Substance, that "the existence of an idea consists in its being perceived".[17] It follows that sense-data, or 'ideas', "however blended or combined together", "cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them."[18] Anyone who will consider the meaning of the word 'exists' applied to "sensible things" will know intuitively, we are told, that the nature of a sensible thing, or an idea, is that it is perceived. "The table exists" means "I see it and feel it etc." Berkeley says: "This is all I can understand by these and the like expressions".[19]

17. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 42 (PRINCIPLES, para. 2)
18. ibid., p. 42 (PRINCIPLES, para. 3)
19. ibid., p. 42 (PRINCIPLES, para. 3)

I believe it is quite clear that Berkeley's first arguments establish a special terminology without which he could not have invested his conclusions with their air of unassailable certainty. In Berkeley's metaphysical language 'perceiving' will always mean 'having ideas'; 'idea' will mean sensible thing, which will be used in such a way that "a sensible thing is not perceived" is self-contradictory, since a sensible thing is defined as something perceived. The term 'exists' when applied to sensible things can only mean that they are perceived or perceptible. This is the linguistic groundwork. Then Berkeley comments:

> "It is indeed an opinion strangely prevailing among men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible &bjects have an existence natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding. But with how great an assurance and acquiescence soever this principle may be entertained in the world; yet whoever shall find it in his heart to call it in question, may, if I mistake not, perceive it to involve a manifest contradiction." [20]

Now while no one would have difficulty in admitting that toothaches and smells, even colours and shapes, are "sensible things", or, in the technical language of the time, "ideas of sensation", it was not at first apparent that Berkeley would make "sensible things" applicable to objects like mountains and houses. He slips in his extension of the term with an air of utter innocence, but of course it comes to the reader as something of a shock. Berkeley's main living admirer has said:

> "It is a nice little piece of controversial finesse, because the reader, in Berkeley's day and today, would find no difficulty in admitting that the existence of an idea consists in being perceived; the shoe pinches only when one is asked to extend that principle to mountains, rivers, etc." [21]

Whether or not we judge Berkeley's trick as nice finesse, his equation

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20. ibid., p. 42 (PRINCIPLES, para. 4) My italics

21. Luce, op. cit., p. 54

of physical things with sensible things permits him to find a contradiction in Locke's view almost immediately. It is impossible, he says, to separate, even in imagination, the "being of a sensible thing from its being perceived".[22] It is impossible to conceive of any sensible object "distinct from the sensation or perception of it."[23] Thus "something exists unperceived" is a contradiction, translatable into "a percept (or an image) is unperceived (or unsensed)", or into, quite simply, "a sensation exists unsensed". "Some physical thing" Berkeley equates with "some sensory thing", and at times with "some sensed thing". Clearly "some sensed thing exists unsensed", or "something which is sensed is not sensed", is self-contradictory. On this model, by redefinition, Berkeley finds a "manifest contradiction" in the statement that a physical thing exists unperceived.

Berkeley goes on to elaborate his view that "something exists unperceived" is self-contradictory. Such a statement, he claims, involves asserting that an essentially unperceiving thing, like a mountain, perceives, for example feels cold or craggy. This curious argument depends on the assumption that colours, textures, temperatures etc. are 'ideas' like images or toothaches.

> "Now for an idea to exist in an unperceiving thing is a manifest contradiction; for to have an idea is all one as to perceive; that therefore wherein colour, figure, and the like qualities exist, must perceive them; hence it is clear there can be no unthinking substance or substratum of those ideas." [24]

At this stage a defender of Locke's view might object that although Substance is only known to exist by an inference from sense-experience, the whole point of postulating it is that it is something which does not consist of ideas in Berkeley's sense, but which is the cause of what Berkeley calls ideas. Further, while it is perfectly obvipus

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22. Berkeley, op. cit., p. 43 (PRINCIPLES, para. 6)
23. ibid., p. 43 (PRINCIPLES, para. 5)
24. ibid., p. 44 (PRINCIPLES, para. 7)

that sensations, for example, cannot exist independently of a percipient, and even suppose that we agree with Locke that sensory qualities are mind-dependent too, this is not to say that something does not exist unperceived in the material world. Berkeley is, of course, prepared for this objection. He asks, what is the something ? If it is an imperceptible substance of which sensory ideas are the perceptible copies, Berkeley argues that a sensory idea can be like nothing but another sensory idea. For example, a colour cannot be said to be like anything but another colour. Hence ideas cannot have insensible counterparts. If the external things are not intended to be things of which our ideas are copies, but things of which they are results, then they must be either perceptible or imperceptible. If they are perceptible, Berkeley gains his point. If they are imperceptible, Berkeley appeals to the reader to ask whether it makes sense to say that, for example, a real sound is inaudible, a real colour invisible, etc.[25]

These arguments, (which have been utilised by modern philosophers faced with interpreting the import of theories of physics and neurology), lead directly to Berkeley's attack on Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities. The argumentation is expanded in the Three Dialogues, but the meat of it, though perhaps the sauce is missed, is in the Principles.

If by "matter" or "substance" we are to understand an inert substratum in which figure, extension, and motion etc. really exist, then, says Berkeley, we are to understand by it an unperceiving thing which has ideas -a self-contradiction. This argument, as I said before, only holds if qualities of shape, size, etc. are interpreted as being ideas in Berkeley's sense, as being, for example,

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25. See ibid., pp. 182 - 183 (First Dialogue Between Hylas and Philonous)

sensations akin to toothaches and twinges. Berkeley seems satisfied that contemporary thought about secondary qualities is already on his side, that all philosophers will admit that secondary qualities are 'sensory objects', but he devotes special argument to showing that primary qualities are too. This consists of two main points:

a) Primary and secondary qualities are logically inseparable. It is impossible that a thing should have primary qualities but no secondary ones. Berkeley's characteristic exclamation is: "How hard to imagine or conceive of a colourless shape ! " "Colourless shape" is an inconsistent expression.

b) Locke used relativity arguments to show that secondary qualities are mind-dependent. Berkeley uses these with equal success to show that primary qualities are mind-dependent too. For example, the mite must see his own foot to be of considerable dimensions, whereas to us it is scarcely discernable. A creature smaller than a mite, on the other hand, would see a mite's foot as we see an elephant's. The size of an object is as relative to its beholder as its colour or texture.[26]

These arguments assume that Locke meant to assert that primary qualities as we know them really exist in external bodies. The primary qualities which Berkeley calls inseparable from secondary qualities are those which we perceive, and the primary qualities which are relative to the beholder are also perceived ones. Berkeley adds an argument, with characteristic thoroughness, against the other possible interpretation of Locke's theory of primary qualities in Substance:

> "The extension therefore which exists without the mind is neither great nor small, the motion neither swift nor slow, that is, they are nothing at all. But, say you, they are extension in general, and motion in general: thus we see how much the tenet of extended, moveable substances existing without the mind, depends on that strange doctrine of <u>abstract ideas</u>. " [27]

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26. See <u>ibid.</u>, pp. 188 -189 (<u>First Dialogue</u>)
27. <u>ibid.</u>, pp. 45-46 (PRINCIPLES, para. 11)

Although he has already shown abstract ideas, on his own terms, to be logically impossible, Berkeley goes on to urge us to make an introspective experiment once again, so that we might be quite convinced that primary qualities cannot be independent of mind. He tells us to try to imagine extension in general, and promises that if we find we can, he will concede the point. Since in order to say that we could imagine any such thing we should also have to say that we had an idea of it in Berkeley's terminology, it is not surprising that Berkeley should be so confident that the experimental result will favour his view. Whatever we imagine when we think about extension in general must be an idea or ideas; so what we imagine must be some particular extension, and not extension in general at all.

Berkeley now attacks Locke's doctrine of Substance on the grounds that no account can be given of the relation between the substratum and the accidents which it is said to support. It is evident that 'support' cannot be taken in its literal meaning, as when a pillar is said to support a building, yet, he complains, there is no other sense in which we are instructed to take it.[28] Locke must have been led either by his senses or his reason to suppose an imperceptible substance exists. It cannot have been his senses which provided evidence, since he defines Substance as something beyond the reach of sense-experience.

> "But what reason can induce us to believe the existence of bodies without the mind, from what we perceive, since the very patrons of matter themselves do not pretend there is any necessary connexion betwixt them and our ideas ?" [29]

This rhetorical question is of course unfair to the "patrons of matter". Locke did think there was a necessary connection between substratum and our simple ideas of sensation, at least he clearly thought that it was necessary to postulate a substance as the cause of those ideas. Berkeley, however, goes on to deal with the contention

28. ibid., p. 47 (PRINCIPLES, para. 16)
29. ibid., p. 48 (PRINCIPLES, para. 18)

that it is necessary to postulate Substance in order to explain the pattern observed among our simple ideas of sensation. He deals with it by commenting that it is quite feasible that we should observe exactly the same patterns we now observe among our ideas without the supposed existence of material bodies.[30] In other words, some ordered ideas are not explicable in terms of external substance, so why should we suppose others are ? Later Berkeley himself has to take account of the ordinary belief that there is a difference between what we see in dreams and what we see in waking life. For the moment he uses it to urge that there is no point in postulating material substance in order to take account of it.

Berkeley makes an interesting comment which tells against the verifiability of his theory as much as it does against that of Locke's, although he did not seem to be aware of this. He says that our sense-experience can provide no evidence for the existence of Substance, since it is quite possible to imagine a mind which had the same pattern of experience without the help of outside bodies, supposing for the sake of argument they could exist.

> "In short, if there were external bodies, it is impossible we should ever come to know it; and if there were not, we might have the very same reasons to think there were that we now have." 31

This insight into the unverifiability of Locke's view can be extended to cover Berkeley's own view that the pattern of our sense-experience is accounted for by the existence of a percipient Deity, which he postulates after disposing of the substratum theory.

I shall now attempt to summarise what seem to me the main points in Berkeley's attack on the doctrine of Substance:

a) An 'idea' is a 'sensible thing' - i.e. a sensation, a sensory quality, an image.

b) "A physical thing exists" is equivalent to "A sensible thing exists", hence to "Someone has or will have certain ideas".

30. ibid., p. 49 (PRINCIPLES, para. 19 & 20)

31. ibid., p. 49 (PRINCIPLES, para. 20)

c) It is logically impossible to imagine (=perceive) a physical object (= a sensible object) existing unperceived (= unsensed)

d) A physical object is no more than a collection of ideas

e) An unperceiving thing, e.g. Locke's substratum or the plain man's table, cannot 'have ideas' (= sensations) and so cannot 'be brown' or 'be square' (= cannot 'have ideas')

f) "Something exists unperceived" (= "Sensations exist unsensed") is a "manifest contradiction".

These points, with reminders of Berkeley's philosophical usage, indicate that his attack on the doctrine of Substance depends on a special use he makes of the tautology "A sensible thing is something sensible", by classifying under "sensible things" physical objects as well as sense-data and images. Thus "A physical thing is something perceived" takes on the essentialist character of "A sensible thing is something sensible".

The Dispute Between Locke and Berkeley

Did Berkeley refute Locke's theory of Substance ? On the surface, and setting aside as far as possible for the moment the sophistications of modern philosophy, one would think that either Locke or Berkeley is right, or that both are wrong. One would imagine that a dispute about the nature of the external world could be settled in some way satisfactory to both parties. One would think, with Professor Luce, that:

> "Material substance, like the sea serpent, either is or is not; there are no two ways about it." 32

Consequently, I wish to see whether there is an obviously possible way in which the dispute between Locke and Berkeley about the ultimate nature of the material world might be resolved; that is, whether there is some fact, statement or ordinary belief, or some appeal to the generally accepted laws of logic, which could serve to show conclusively whether Locke is right, Berkeley is right, or both

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32. Luce, op. cit., p. 156

are wrong.

Berkeley's Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous were constructed to show that any argument against the doctrine of "immaterialism" could be met by an answer which looked conclusive. Below I will attempt to produce an imaginary dialogue between Locke and Berkeley which will differ from Berkeley's not only in its considerably inferior style and skill, but in its design, which will be to bring out that an opponent of Berkeley's need not be as easily shaken by his arguments as Hylas was. I wish to see whether, supposing Locke and Berkeley were to dispute about their views without having undergone a change of outlook, it seems at all likely that they could find factual or logical grounds for agreement, and if so, what sort of grounds they would be. The imaginary dialogue is also intended to pinpoint the main issues of their dispute, and to be a way of showing how Berkeley's view about a divine percipient is parallel to Locke's about an imperceptible substance.

Let us suppose that Locke and Berkeley meet and have a genuine wish to resolve their metaphysical differences, although each still has his same motive and attitude. We can imagine two scientists trying to reach agreement about two rival hypotheses; the question is whether the Locke-Berkeley dispute is comparable with such a case.

Locke: We agree that the mind is first made aware of the external physical world by receiving simple ideas of sensation. We also agree that the mind, noticing a certain pattern among those ideas, assigns single names to those which recur in well-ordered groups.

Berkeley: Yes, as you have said, the mind becomes aware of a lily by having discrete simple ideas which are constantly grouped together, and these we call 'lily' as if they were one thing. You would also agree that we cannot become aware of the material world except through the evidence of our five senses.

Locke: Not directly aware of it, no. But the mind does become aware that there must be something material which supports and is responsible for those recurring groups of simple ideas. Why otherwise should we consider them to be single things, rather than collections of many diverse and scattered impressions ?

Berkeley: You still deny that a cherry cannot be anything but what we see, taste, feel, and smell ? You admitted, surely, that we know a cherry by these simple ideas of sensation. Are you now falling back on the view that we never do, after all, know a cherry, since it is not what we see, touch, taste and smell ?

Locke: Of cpurse I agree that the only way to recognise a cherry is to see, taste, smell or touch it. We only know that there are material things because we have ideas of colour, temperature, texture, size, solidity, and all those others we both talk about. But because I admit that I know or recognise a cherry by the simple ideas I have of it, I do not also have to admit what seems to be obviously false, that the cherry is no more than a collection of those simple ideas. I reiterate, how do you suppose those ideas hang together, and how do you suppose we come to have them at all, unless some substratum unites and causes them?

Berkeley: Since we have agreed to attempt agreement, let me point out your mistake in another way, and bite back the exclamations which are on the tip of my tongue. You will not wish to go on maintaining a view that is self-contradictory?

Locke: No one would.

Berkeley: Then consider what it is you assert. It is a self-contradiction to say that ideas exist unperceived. How can a perception exist independently of a percipient, and what would it be to say there was a thought but no thinker ?

Only clowns or lunatics would say that inanimate objects have ideas. How is it possible to perceive if you are not a percipient ? Ideas can only exist in the mind. Yet you say that material things are imperceptible and inanimate. You imply ideas are not perceptible, or that inamimate things have ideas. You might as well advance the view that squares must have six sides.

Locke: Of course it is necessarily true that a sensible thing is perceptible, and I agree that stones cannot feel cold. I also agree that a sensible thing cannot exist apart from a percipient, and that is why I argued that the colour and the heat is not in the fire, but in me. Of course the fire cannot perceive colour and heat; "The fire is hot" means that I, not the fire, feels hot. But I cannot affirm too strongly that real primary qualities[33] and Substance <u>are not sensory things.</u> I have said many times that we cannot have a particular sensory idea of Substance and its powers, and in your sense of 'idea' these things are not ideas at all, not sensory objects, but rather, perhaps, what you would call 'notions'. When I talk about the <u>idea</u> of Substance you must remember what I mean by 'idea', not necessarily a <u>sensory</u> object of thought. Many objects of thought are hazy and not a bit like sensations, percepts or precise images. But since we are trying to resolve our dispute, and not to prolong it, I shall not use this word 'idea' which raises a verbal dust between us. Observe our percepts, and consider for a moment how we speak about them. Now how do you suppose this book, which I recognise as a group of sensory qualities, is a single thing, and not some other thing, like the group of sensory qualities I

33. I am aware that Locke might be interpreted differently <u>re</u> primary qualities. See Chapter Two of this thesis.

call 'the table', unless there is an underlying causal substance? The book involves different causal powers from the table, or I should not be able to distinguish between the two. As you rightly said, these causal powers cannot be my ideas, which are passive, and so incapable of causing other ideas, except perhaps images. There must surely be some unifying power which explains these material things, while our only knowledge of them consists of discrete sense-experiences.

Berkeley: You have asked, among many other things, why we should group our ideas together in one way rather than another. They are grouped in the patterns they are not by us, but by God, who has arranged the world he created for commodious living and beauty. To me the visible beauty of the creation, the regular patterns among our simple ideas of sensation, are direct evidence of a divine percipient. I do not see how your postulation of an inert and featureless somewhat can explain the pattern of our experiences. They might well be what they are whether or not any such thing as you call substance exists.

Locke: I do not agree. It seems to me obvious that the "visible beauty of the creation", as you call it, (although, of course, created by God), is the result of the action upon our senses of secret powers hidden in its substance, and you have not convinced me that I am wrong. You say I cannot tell from my experience that material substance exists. I say that you cannot tell from yours that God is a percipient.

But that dispute is a cul-de-sac. Let me ask you now, how you account for the differences between what we perceive in dreams and fits of madness, and what we perceive when we are awake and sane ? Or between those ideas we conjure up for ourselves at will, and those which we cannot help having if we are awake and in possession of

our faculties ? You surely do not wish to deny that the memory picture I now create in my mind of the Earl of Shaftesbury is different from the ideas I had of him when, from time to time, I was in his service directly observing the man ? It seems obvious that some ideas are caused by something outside ourselves, and others by our own imaginations. Is it not equally obvious that the ideas not caused by ourselves must be caused by things in themselves, by substances capable of acting on our senses ?

Berkeley: I do agree that there is a difference in our ideas, some can be conjured up at will, others are the result of some agency not our own. But since the nature of an idea consists in its being perceived, no idea can exist unless it is perceived. Consequently the true answer to your question is that some ideas, in dreams and imagination and the like, are created by our own minds, and others, all those which make up the external world, are created by a divine mind.

Locke: Let me put another point, then, about why I cannot honestly feel converted to your view. Your esse est percipi principle seems to take away the reality from things. I was never satisfied with the consequence of your view that a spirit and not the fire heats me when I stand before the fireplace. Indeed, this objection is not irreligious, since a recent defender of yours has admitted that it is difficult to adjust to the notion that the divine power which forgives sins also boils the breakfast egg.[34] I can see no reason for your opinion that my view is not more plausible, namely that it is the real fire which heats us, and not a divine

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34. See Luce, op. cit., p. 161: he admits the difficulty while not admitting that it is insuperable

spirit - although, of course, a divine spirit created these causal powers in substance.

Berkeley: I cannot understand why you should seek to explain the simple and familiar - the warmth of the fire or the crimson of the sunset - in terms of some unknown ghostly power which works inscrutably in an unseen world of quite indescribable extensions and motions, whatever they may be. The real grass, commonsense avows, is the grass I smell and walk upon in the garden. It is not something I can never see, nor smell, nor feel beneath my feet.

Locke: We must make fresh starts in an effort to reach agreement. We say the grass is green, or brown, long, or short, fine, tough, dry, or wet, and so on. What do you suppose we are saying, if we are not saying something about the grass ?

Berkeley: Certainly if we said these things, we would be talking about the grass.

Locke: Then if we are saying something about the grass, we are not making some such statement as "greenness, dampness, fineness, etc. is green, damp, fine etc.", for this would be a trivial proposition, and the assertion "The grass is green, damp, etc." is not a trifling proposition of that nature. So we must be saying something, as you confessed, about the grass, and not about the collection of simple ideas by which we recognise the grass. And this demonstrates that the grass is something other than its sensory attributes. So I must say again, there must be some unknown ...

Berkeley: There is no need to repeat it, I know that you think this argument shows there must be some unknown substance which is the real grass. But I must ask again, what more could this real grass be, but a certain texture,

colour, shape, smell, etc.? What reason is there to imagine that real grass is something we never know about? Is it not, in all honesty, a little absurd to say that the grass which cows eat, scythes cut, that covers the fields and grows for all to see, is really an unknowable somewhat, a something you cannot say what ?

Locke: Have patience, for I do not find it absurd. The fact that we have most imperfect knowledge of what substance is like is no argument against its existence. It seems to me that these very experiences you mention, cutting, seeing and walking upon grass, show that there must be something which makes them different from other kinds of experiences, remembering grass or dreaming about it. Now you say that the real things are ideas in God's mind, while the illusory ones or those which we deliberately conjure up in our minds are not. The dispute between us seems to resolve into one about whether it is correct to postulate an unknowable material substance or an omnipresent, omnipercipient God as the ultimate subject of our ideas. You interpret 'seeing all things in God' too literally, without due regard for physical causation. Whether that is so or not, of one point I am convinced, that you talk about ideas in God's mind for those same reasons that make me say they are sometimes caused by an imperceptible substance.

Berkeley: Yes, to account for the validity of groups of ideas which are real things in contrast to illusory or imaginative ideas. Also, to account for the continued existence of material things when no one is perceiving them. And there is more which you have not mentioned to which you would agree. We both need to account for what one of my successors would call the relation of the apparent elliptical penny to the real shape of the penny, which is round. Nevertheless, I cannot agree that any explanation of all this is true unless it is in terms of God's eternal vigilance, and not of an inexplicable mystery of the sort you call substance.

Locke: I have tried to steer our conversation into concord. It seemed as if we might be pronouncing the same truths in different ways, since we both seemed to be taking account of the same points. But now I see that in order to agree with you I should have to believe that it is absurd to speak of material things existing unperceived by human minds, unless I meant by this that they existed in God's mind. Then I should have to agree that material things are merely, and not only nominally, groups of sensory ideas. For reasons which I could only repeat, since I still urge them, I cannot agree to any of these conclusions of yours.

Berkeley: And I see no reason why I should cease to believe them, since the alternative you offer seems to me no more than patent and impious nonsense.

The feature which most strikes the attention as a result of wondering how Locke and Berkeley might have resolved their dispute, is that facts about experience, and commonsense beliefs about material objects, which we would expect to be the very considerations which would serve to resolve it, are not denied by either theory.

Locke states: "Something exists which is imperceptible". Berkeley retorts: "Nothing in the material world can exist unperceived, unless it is a Spirit". We feel: "Let's find out which of them is right". Yet it begins to look as if there is no way of finding this out. If we try to do so by studying our experience, we plunge into logical absurdity, for we are looking for something which by definition we can never find - we are hoping to perceive something imperceptible. There is no possible sense-evidence which could be produced to establish either that there is or is not imperceptible substance. As Berkeley reiterated, for a different purpose, we cannot perceive the imperceptible, so we cannot decide by sense-

evidence whether or not the imperceptible exists in the material world.

> "When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas". [35]

Sense-experience is irrelavant to the truth-value of Locke's view and Berkeley's attack on it, since they both refer, one in a spirit of sympathy and the other in a spirit of rejection, to something which by definition cannot be contained in any logically possible experience.

The dispute is, like the abstract ideas dispute, irresolvable by reference to fact. This is the point to be developed, together with others which arise from it, in the following chapter.

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35. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 50 (PRINCIPLES, para. 23)

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LOCKE-BERKELEY DISPUTE

"But everything does not hit alike upon every man's imagination. We have our understandings no less different than our palates; and he that thinks the same truth shall be equally relished by every one in the same dress, may as well hope to feast every one with the same sort of cookery." [1]

1. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 12 (The Epistle to the Reader)

The question has been raised, how can we be sure whether Locke or Berkeley is right, or both wrong, or which theory is true, or are both false ? An attempt to answer these questions impartially is quickly foiled by the discovery that it is far from plain what a reliable procedure for determining the truth of the theories would be.

The following are the obvious ways in which a metaphysical view might be tested:

a) By appealing to the relevant facts, and to commonsense beliefs; in this case to facts about perception and common beliefs about physical things.

b) By appealing to "ordinary language"; in this case, some philosophers would test the views by asking whether they are the results of confusion about ordinary language, or whether they give a 'correct analysis' of material-object statements.

c) By asking whether the views are internally consistent.

d) By considering whether the views "give insight" into classical philosophical problems.

Metaphysicians themselves lay stress on a) and c), anti-metaphysicians on b), and neutrals on d). It is evident that if and when we conclude that Locke's theory is true, or that Berkeley's is, our conclusions will have different implications according to the criterion we have used to test the theories. For example, we may mean by calling a view 'true' that it contains no contradictions, or that it describes the facts correctly, or that it contains insight, or simply that it commits no gross sin against "ordinary language". I am going to consider these criteria in turn, and ask what relevance they have, if any, for determining the truth or falsity of the views put forward by Locke and Berkeley.

a) The Appeal to Facts and Commonsense Beliefs

I tried to show, what indeed seems obvious, that "Real things are imperceptible", "Or real things are without exception perceived", are statements which it is logically impossible to verify by an examination of perceptual experience. This is the case simply because it is a necessary truth that one cannot perceive the imperceptible, while this logical impossibility is what we should have to achieve

in order to find sense-evidence for or against the substratum theory. Nevertheless, the view that the Locke-Berkeley dispute about the external world could be verified by appealing to the facts of the case must be taken seriously, because both these metaphysicians certainly thought that they were giving true accounts of what the material world is like, that they were doing a kind of super-physics. Many of their arguments appeal to facts. The possibility that they were indeed trying to give straightforward descriptions of the world must be given a fair trial.

Berkeley often gave as a reason for saying that physical things are no more than 'collections of ideas' the fact that when I perceive a physical thing, I always have ideas. It sounds, the way he puts it, as if this is something like saying "Whenever I smell a train I always have a headache". It sounds as if <u>it so happens</u> that when I perceive a physical thing I also have ideas, as it so happens that whenever I smell a train I get a headache. But of course while it is logically possible to refute the claim that there is a connection between smelling trains and getting headaches, it is not logically possible to refute, for example, "Whenever I see a physical thing I have visual sensations". This statement does not describe a fact, it exhibits a tautology. Part of the meaning of "see a physical thing" is "have visual sensations", and it is a genuine self-contradiction to assert that I see a physical thing but have no visual sensations. So one kind of fact to which Berkeley appeals is not genuine fact, but definition and resultant tautology dressed up to look like fact.

Nevertheless Locke and Berkeley do talk about physical things, about cherries and lilies, mountains and wax, and their arguments draw constantly upon our ordinary experience of these familiar things. But at the level of common experience, there is no disagreement between them, and no metaphysical speculation. Neither Locke nor Berkeley ever deny that we see and touch chairs and tables, hear horses' hooves and bird songs, etc. The disagreement starts

when Locke denies that these things are ultimately real and Berkeley insists that they are. Is this a question which can be decided by paying attention to tables, lilies, and bird songs ? No one, in his right mind, upon being asked whether the apple he is eating is really a group of sense-data or really an unknowable substance, examines the apple more closely to find out.

The perceptual facts - that we see and touch and smell many objects, hear many noises and taste many flavours - are not denied, but used in the views of Locke and Berkeley. Suppose then we try to test these views by appeal to commonsense beliefs - e.g. the belief that my desk is still in the room when I am not, that lilies and mountains exist in their own right in the world, and are not dependent upon my presence. These too Locke and Berkeley accommodate rather than deny. Berkeley's percipient God and Locke's imperceptible substratum are put forward as ways of taking account of these common beliefs in the persistence and independence of material objects. The metaphysical views sponsor the common faith in the reliability and comparative permanence of physical objects compared with the flux of personal sense-impressions.

There is, however, one part of both views which might be said to conflict with commonsense, and that is the metaphysical assumption that our knowledge of the external world consists basically in having discrete sensa. But, as I shall try to show at some length later in this thesis, it is not quite right to say that this assumption conflicts with commonsense, since the way of looking at the world which it involves is one completely alien to non-metaphysical thought, which neither suggests it nor fails to suggest it. The mere fact that commonsense does not deal with questions about the ultimate analysis of sense-experience fails to show that these views can be refuted by appeal to it. If we said it did, it would be too much like saying that the fact the Kikuyu tribe do not consider problems of psycho-analysis indicates that Freudian hypotheses can be refuted by quoting them.

b) The Appeal to Ordinary Language

To begin with, there is a useful sense in which we can say that these metaphysicians use technical terms, their central words are in many cases those which would not be used in the same way in common speech. We do not normally use the word 'idea' either in Locke's or Berkeley's sense. "He is full of ideas" seldom means "He is having a great many sense-experiences" for example. This is not because 'idea' is an obsolete term. It is because it is a philosophical term, like its successors - "sense-data", "sensa", "sense-contents", etc. The technical philosophical vocabulary which we call the phenomenalist language, (recognising that it is a different language from ordinary English only in the sense that American, but not French, is a 'different' language from it), is a very queer one, but also so philosophically familiar that its queerness is apt to be overlooked.

If the phenomenalist language can be said to "go against" ordinary language at all, it does so because it creates a philosophical picture of the world which is certainly not found in non-philosophical thought. This language or picture was already in vogue when Locke wrote. It gives the impression that an orange, or a cherry, is made of bits - not bits of peel, pulp and pip, but bits of colour, shape, smell, texture, size, etc. Berkeley said:

> "Take away the sensations of softness, moisture, redness, tartness, and you take away the cherry." [2]

The commonsense thought is: "Eat the skin, the pulp, and throw away the stone, and you lose the cherry." Berkeley's notion is modelled on the commonsense notion of what it is to make a cherry vanish; but it also transforms that notion. It is as though a physical thing were made of discrete sensa just as a building is made of bricks. As Dr. Macdonald has said:

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2. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 249 (Third Dialogue Between Hylas and Philonous)

> "The metaphor suggests and was undoubtedly intended to suggest that by abstraction an intellectual analysis of objects was performed which showed their composition in a way analogous to that in which a chemical analysis reveals their chemical composition." 3

There does not seem to be any obvious commonsense excuse for talking about things in the world as if they are made of sensa. While we do in ordinary situations distinguish the smell or the colour of an orange from the orange itself, e.g. we say that the orange is sour or is green, we do not assume that the colour or the taste is a different thing from the orange. We abstract to the extent of paying attention to the colour or the taste of the fruit and not to the fruit itself. Yet, in commonsense terms, it would be extraordinarily eccentric to suppose that by doing so we 'take away the colour', as Berkeley would have it.

> "For when we abstract red from this object we do not leave it colourless." 4

We do not apply some strange kind of datum-eradicator. Neither does commonsense envisage the world as a network of portions of smell, minute shades of colour, tiny bits of textures, but as an ordered world of physical things which have different qualities. A sane mother would not teach her child the meaning of 'cherry' by saying anything like this: "That very shade of red, that particular taste and texture, that degree of juiciness, that very kind of smell, shape, shininess, dullness, and all those other sensa, whenever they occur together in precisely that way, and also when they are slightly different, for example when the juiciness or the texture is not quite the same, or the colour entirely different, etc., are called, as if they were one thing, 'cherry'." This is as absurd as the situation with which Berkeley taunted the advocates of abstract ideas, when he imagined children unable to chatter about their trinkets until they had tacked together numberless properties in their minds. A child is taught by pointing, "That's a cherry,

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3. Margaret Macdonald, "The Philosopher's Use of Analogy", Logic and Language, ed. A.G.N. Flew, (First Series), Blackwell: 1951. p. 87

4. ibid., p. 87

and so is that, but not that, or that .."; and although he will then recognise a cherry by its sensory qualities, it will never occur to him until he goes to philosophy classes, and possibly not even then, that those qualities may be the constituents of the cherry, as the cards are the constituents of the pack. "Cherries are red", he will say, and never mean that certain sensory qualities co-exist in a certain complicated way.

This is not the chapter in which I intend to tread too far the perilous ground of what non-philosophers mean by "physical objects", and how the common notion of houses, spoons, buses and all the other familiar inanimate objects of the world differs from the metaphysical presuppositions about them.[5] But I wish to emphasise immediately the point that the Locke-Berkeley dispute is carried on largely in technical terms - in terms of 'having ideas' rather than eating apples. I wish to emphasise the difference between their dispute about the external world and everyday disagreements about the contents of that world, like the one about whether there are abominable snowmen on Everest, or the one about whether flying saucers come from Russia, America, or another planet. The metaphysical disagreement seems to rest on a strange and mutual presupposition, incomparable with any to be found in ordinary talk, namely the presupposition that the world we experience is a complicated jigsaw puzzle whose pieces are discrete sensa, or 'simple ideas of sensation'.

Let us now reconsider the familiar accusation that metaphysicians fail to pay due attention to ordinary language. This suggests that we should be able to tell whether Locke or Berkeley is mistaken or confused by comparing their views with the way in which we usually talk about the material world. We should be able, one would have thought, to refute or confirm "A cherry is an unknowable substratum", or "A cherry is no more than a collection of ideas", by finding some way in which we ordinarily talk about things like cherries which the

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5. This point is most fully considered in Chapter Nine of this thesis.

metaphysical assertions either describe or misdescribe, understand or misunderstand, use correctly or incorrectly.

First, the accusation may be that Locke, or Berkeley, or both, intend to describe or to use ordinary language correctly in their theories and fail. This seems to me very implausible, if only because of the sort of points these philosophers make about ordinary language. It seems evident from these that neither Locke nor Berkeley intended to give a description of common speech, and it also seems evident that where their theories could not be suitably expressed in plain commonsense terms, they were fully aware of this and unconcerned about it. Consider Berkeley's statement:

> "But, say you, it sounds very harsh to say we eat and drink ideas, and are clothed with ideas. I acknowledge that it does so, the word 'idea' not being used in common discourse to signify the several combinations of sensible qualities, which are called things: and it is certain that any expression which varies from the familiar use of language will seem harsh and ridiculous. But this doth not concern the truth of the proposition, which in other words is no more than to say, we are fed and clothed with those things which we perceive immediately by our senses .. If therefore you agree with me that we eat and drink and are clad with the immediate objects of sense which cannot exist unperceived or without the mind: I shall readily grant it is more proper or conformable to custom, that they should be called things rather than ideas." [6]

In short, Berkeley is fully prepared to accept ordinary speech, the commonly used word 'thing', provided that we accept his philosophical point about the significance of the word 'thing'. We may speak of 'things', and keep in line with ordinary language, provided we realise that strictly speaking our assertions are about ideas. It will no doubt be objected that in ordinary language 'thing' does not mean 'collection of ideas'. It is, of course, not easy to say what this word does mean in ordinary language, but presumably one common meaning of the term is inanimate object. The propositions "A thing is an unknowable material

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6. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 56-57 (PRINCIPLES, para. 38) My italics

substance", and "A thing is a collection of ideas", surely do not misdescribe this common meaning of the word, although neither do they merely describe it.

Some philosophers have spoken of "ordinary language" as if it were a precise calculus, a set of tables to which we should refer whenever a metaphysical problem appears otherwise irresolvable. This presupposes that metaphysical problems result from and are couched in ordinary language terms. While it is obvious that Locke and Berkeley wrote for the most part in ordinary English, it is equally obvious that important parts of their theories lead to some assertions which are not translatable into statements which would normally be made in non-philosophical contexts. When this happens, they realise that their language has become technical, and do not try to avoid making uncommon statements, but rather point out the point of doing so. Berkeley says that his technical statements convey the truth better than ordinary ones.

> "In the ordinary affairs of life, any phrases may be retained, so long as they excite in us proper sentiments, or dispositions to act in such a manner as is necessary for our well-being, how false soever they may be, if taken in a strict and speculative sense." 7

Berkeley distinguished between the common expressions of ordinary talk which are useful, and the 'true' metaphysical statements about the nature of the external world which may reveal the inaccuracy of common expressions. He goes on to emphasise that ordinary language is best suited to "received opinions, which are not always the truest."[8]

Locke too studied ordinary language, and decided that it was inadequate for metaphysical theorising. The ordinary signification of the word 'gold', for example, "must unavoidably be very uncertain". Certain qualities are "always united in nature" to make up gold, but individual people will know gold by some of its qualities and not others; one person will mean by 'gold' something of a certain colour, weight and fusibility, while another will mean by it something

7. & 8 ibid., p. 63 (PRINCIPLES, para. 52)

with a certain weight and colour but also with the property of being soluble in aqua regia, etc.[9] Consequently "we have but very imperfect descriptions of things, and words have very uncertain significations".[10] For metaphysical purposes, Locke thought that ordinary language would require some sifting:

> "But I am apt to imagine, that, were the imperfections of language, as the instrument of knowledge, more thoroughly weighed, a great many of the controversies that make such a noise in the world, would of themselves cease; and the way to knowledge, and perhaps peace too, lie a great deal opener than it does." [11]

Now since both Locke and Berkeley seem to have believed that ordinary language is not in itself entirely adequate for the purposes of metaphysical speculation, or arriving at 'the truth' in metaphysics, I find it hard to believe that their theories are even disguised descriptions of that language, whether successful or unsuccessful. It seems clear that they were not interested in giving accounts of ordinary expressions, or tracing the logic of our speech, but in proving something about the world. If we suppose that they intended to describe common usage, we cannot explain why they introduced technical terms, like 'idea', and pointed out the merits of doing so. Surely they had other fish to fry.

We come to the other accusation, that Locke and Berkeley were confused about, or misused, ordinary langauge unintentionally, and that their views are refutable, or cease to require refutation, as soon as we see the linguistic muddles they produced. This Wittgensteinian attitude to metaphysics is perhaps the most common today. For all that, it is implausible.

Because this view is so widely held by so distinguished a company, further discussion will be devoted to it in Chapter Eight, where more metaphysical material will have been expounded to provide examples.

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9. Locke, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 116 (Bk. III, Ch. 9)
10. ibid., p. 117 (Bk. III, Ch. 9)
11. ibid., pp. 119 - 120 (Bk. III, Ch. 9)

Some remarks will be made here, however, about the inapplicability of the accusation to Locke and Berkeley.

In the first place, it seems that both were aware of the nuances and common purposes of ordinary expressions. Where their theories depart from common discourse, they tell us so. We normally mean by a piece of gold something we see and touch, but considered truly, or in itself, gold is a hidden substance. We normally mean by a mountain something which exists unperceived, but the truth of the matter is that it is a sensible thing, and so cannot exist unperceived by any mind at all. Usually 'idea' has quite a different sense, but we must use this term if we want to see what our experience 'really is'. If this is the way these metaphysicians think, it sounds a little absurd to accuse them of linguistic confusion. Consider the possibility of accusing poets of making linguistic mistakes, of saying that the following couplet must be rejected since in ordinary language it expresses nothing but self-contradictions:

> "Shape without form, shade without colour,
> Paralysed force, gesture without motion" [12]

If we made such an accusation, we surely would have missed the point of the expressions used by Eliot. Similarly, I suspect that to say "Simple ideas inhere in some substratum", or "Nothing exists without the mind", have no sense in ordinary language, or no commonsense counterpart statements, misses the point of these metaphysical assertions. I shall try to show this in detail as this study progresses or lengthens. In the meantime the following points are notable. It might be said that Berkeley denies the existence of Matter, and is consequently making a false ordinary language statement. Berkeley himself was aware that this might be said, and he made it quite clear that his statement was not to be understood as an ordinary language one at all:

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12. From T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men"

> "The only thing whose existence we deny, is that which philosophers call matter or corporeal substance. And in doing of this, there is no damage done to the rest of mankind, who, I dare say, will never miss it."[13]

"Matter does not exist" is not translatable into "Chairs, trees, mountains, etc. do not exist". Berkeley did not intend it to be, for he wanted to affirm that these things do exist. As soon as we imagine that Berkeley is misusing ordinary language, by not allowing 'matter' to refer to chairs etc., it is hard to explain why he produced his theory at all.

This brings us to the other accusations, that Locke and Berkeley, although they do not try to describe or to use ordinary speech correctly all the time, and fail by mistake, do deliberately set out to misuse or misdescribe it. I think the reasons why it is implausible to say that they describe common speech apply equally to show the implausibility of saying that they misdescribe it. They do not utter statements about words and phrases, they make statements about things. To say, however, that Locke and Berkeley deliberately misuse some ordinary language expressions seems more nearly true, but ambiguous.

These metaphysicians do not always use ordinary language, and sometimes they give ordinary expressions implications which they normally would not be considered to have. For example, Locke infers from the grammatical form of many of our ordinary propositions that they refer ultimately to an unknowable substance. In this sense, if someone insisted, it would be possible to admit that he deliberately misused or was confused about common speech. But it is a very thin sense of 'misuse' and 'confused'. If someone misuses a word, he is using it for a purpose which it is not designed to serve, he mistakes or ignores its dictionary meaning. If someone thinks that 'to expedite' means to set forth on an expedition he can be corrected and the correction will be accepted. If he persists, and says that he prefers his own meaning

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13. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 55 (PRINCIPLES, para. 35)

to the commonly accepted one, he will still be considered to be misusing the word. But suppose he is a poet, and uses the phrase "tenuous membrane" to refer to what people would normally refer to by the word 'soul'. In this case, when he makes it clear that he knows his expression is given unusual application and he uses it in this way in order to make a point about his introspective experience, we would not, I suspect, continue to say that he is misusing language. He is using it in an unusual way in order to express something which he does not feel can be appropriately expressed in plain speech. In the same sense, it is doubtful whether Locke and Berkeley misuse language, for they use words in a special way designed to express argumentation in favour of what they believe the world is really like. In short, to say they misuse, or are confused about, language suggests that they change the meanings and implications of terms and statements simply for the sake of doing so, and not for a specific purpose. This, as I shall attempt to show in this thesis, seems quite wrong.

c) The Criterion of Internal Consistency

Some philosophers, unable to find the facts against which metaphysical theories might be measured, and dissatisfied by the ordinary language criteria for judging them, have concluded that if one metaphysical system is 'better' than another, it is beaause it contains fewer non sequitors or exhibits more logical consistency.

With this criterion in mind, we can accuse Locke of contradicting his original maxim that all knowledge arises from sense-experience by his doctrine of unknowable substance. Or we can accuse Berkeley of contradicting his esse est percipi principle when he introduces 'notions' of spirits. It is well known, however, that these complaints fail to provide conclusive refutations, at least in the minds of adherents to the views which they criticise. There is always room in philosophical discussions for defences. "Certainly

Locke believed that all knowledge arises from sense-experience. Knowledge that there must be some substratum arises precisely from this. It is sense-experience which leads to the necessity to postulate Substance." "When Berkeley said esse est percipi he was, of course, referring, as he said, to sensible things. Spirits perceive, and sensible things are perceived by them. Of the first we have notions, of the second ideas. There is no self-contradiction." In this way a philosophical dispute can arise as easily between the advocates and enemies of a metaphysical system as it can between its author and a rival metaphysician. However inconsistent a view may prima facie seem, there are always those who, without seeming in the least absurd, refuse to reject it. They would, of course, seem absurd if the criterion of internal consistency were indeed appropriate as a guide to judgments about metaphysical systems.

Even John Stuart Mill's alleged 'howler' in equating what is desired with what is desirable is defensible. While it would not be defensible to say, for example, that 'desired' in fact, in ordinary language, means the same as 'desirable', for it does not. But it is in the best metaphysical tradition to say that 'desired' really means 'desirable', that it is a truth to state that whatever is desired is also desirable. By urging this view, we would not have to deny anything that is written down in dictionaries.

Suppose there were a case of a metaphysical view which all philosophers unanimously agreed was inconsistent. Even then, those who sympathised with its spirit could say, without seeming unreasonable, "It's badly argued, but it's true". The criterion of internal consistency cannot be very helpful in this type of situation.

d) Philosophical Insight

Some people judge metaphysical views by asking which of them contains the most 'insight' into philosophical problems, or, in the current idiom, into the structure of philosophical problems.

The difficulty is to know what is to count as 'insight'. There is a danger that by "X had great insight when he said S" we mean merely "I sympathise with X when he says S". Consider, for example,

what Professor Ayer once said about Berkeley's insight:

> "Nor is it fair to regard Berkeley as a metaphysician." (sic) For he did not, in fact, deny the reality of material things, as we are still too commonly told. What he denied was the adequacy of Locke's analysis of the notion of a material thing. He maintained that to say of various 'ideas of sensation' that they belonged to a single material thing was not, as Locke thought, to say that they were related to a single observable underlying 'somewhat', but rather that they stood in certain relations to one another. And in this he was right. Admittedly he made the mistake of supposing that what was immediately given in sensation was necessarily mental; ... what Berkeley discovered was that material things must be definable in terms of sense-contents." 14

The discovery which is here attributed to Berkeley was, it might be argued, Locke's, for Locke's theory about the nominal essences of material things surely implies that "material things must be definable in terms of sense-contents". The issue at stake was not this, but whether the definition made in terms of ideas can be the final and only definition of a material thing. Ayer regards Locke's answer to this as a mistake. But there is no conclusive reason why someone else should not regard Berkeley's answer as the mistake, and Locke's as showing insight. There are no rules for determining what is mistake and what is insight in metaphysics. In a sense we can say that both Locke and Berkeley had some sort of insight and this is why we still read their works. But it is hard to state what exactly the quality we are attributing to them is. I do not believe that it has anything to do with discovering truths, or describing new facts.

The criteria of facts, common beliefs, language, consistency and degree of insight do not provide us with a reliable instrument for gauging the value of a metaphysical theory. All these possible criteria are either inapplicable or indeterminate. Nevertheless the feeling remains that surely some waycould be found of deciding whether these theories are true or false, right or wrong, or at least correct or incorrect. So I shall prolong my search.

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14. A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, Gollancz: 1946 (second edition). p. 53

The strength of Berkeley's contention that Locke wrote down 'manifest contradictions' seems to come from certain redefinitions he makes of important terms in the dispute. In particular his redefinition of 'idea' enables him to find contradictions in Locke's doctrines of abstract ideas and substance, as I have tried to show. His extension of the meaning of the ordinary word 'perceive', to cover contemplation of any of our ideas, i.e. to cover what would normally be meant by 'imagining', or 'conceiving of', or 'conjuring up', cuts us off from an obvious escape route - "Of course I can conceive of things existing unperceived in the material world; penguins at the North Pole, for example" - since now to imagine something is to perceive it. Nothing can be imagined existing unperceived, since what is imagined is ipso facto perceived.

> "But, say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and no body by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it: but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call 'books' and 'trees', and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them ? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while ?" 15

We are, as it were, trapped in the cage of our own ideas when we try to contend against Berkeley that things exist in the material world whether any mind perceives them or not.

Let us now consider in a little more detail Berkeley's line of argument, and see if it provides any clues about how we might judge the truth-value of his theory, or about what sort of theory it is.

The following is one of his main arguments:

(1) When I immediately perceive a physical thing, I always apprehend sense-data, and however hard I try I cannot apprehend anything else.

(2) Therefore a physical thing cannot be anything more than a group of these sense-data.

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15. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 50 (PRINCIPLES, para. 23) My italics

(3) But I do believe, for example, that penguins exist at the North Pole even when I am not there to perceive them.

(4) Therefore some other mind must be having these data, and that must be the only all-seeing, omnipresent mind - God's.

(1) is a necessarily true proposition. It is logically impossible to immediately perceive a physical thing without having sense-data, (or, as Berkeley himself would say, 'ideas'), since sense-data are defined as what we immediately perceive. (1), we might say, is the trivial tautology "When I immediately perceive a physical thing I immediately perceive it", expressed in such a way that its triviality, but not its necessity, is disguised. Now although Berkeley gives (2) as one of the reasons for believing (1), (2) does not follow from (1). (2) is not in ordinary usage a tautology, or even a true statement. Outside the context of Berkeley's system, (1) would not appear to be a reason for believing (2). No non-philosopher would be moved by the argument that since, when I see a thing, I always have visual data, that thing I see cannot be anything more than a group of such data. He would not be moved, because the line of thought would seem so alien.

Take some common non-philosophical types of reasoning. If I am told that a horse has not won the Derby, because it came second, and I know that it is true that it came second, it would be very bad logic, or ignorance of the meaning of 'won', if I continued to be hopeful that it may have won. But it is not bad logic, nor ignorance of the meanings of the terms involved, to know that it is true that whenever I immediately perceive a material thing, I apprehend sense-data and nothing else, yet continue to feel that a material thing is something more than a group of sense-data. Yet, while we read Berkeley, it does seem as if this should be bad logic. Then there is the causal sort of ordinary reasoning, which is equally unlike Berkeley's. If I am told that my train will be late, because the station has received word from down the line that it has broken down, and I rely on this report, it would be foolish to say: "Yes, I know it has broken down, but I think it will be on time." For the truth of "The train has broken down" makes it very highly probable on

the basis of past experience that it will be late. "Whenever I immediately perceive a physical thing I always apprehend sense-data, I know this, but a physical thing is something more than a group of sense-data" is not foolish in this way, and it makes no sense to say "on the basis of past experience it is highly probable that a physical thing is a group of sense-data". There is nothing to which the phrase "on the basis of past experience" can refer in this case.

What sort of reason, then, could Berkeley have considered (1) to be for believing (2) ? It seems to me that (1) is a very strong reason for believing (2) <u>if it is interpreted in a certain way</u>. It becomes a strong reason if it is interpreted as, not the simple tautology which most of us regard it to be, but as a statement which implies that I <u>could</u> directly perceive more than sense-data when I directly perceive a physical thing, but that <u>it so happens</u> I never will, because as a matter of fact there is nothing other than sense-data to be directly perceived. This would make it more like saying "When I see a live fish I always see scales, so all live fish must have scales". Regarded from this admittedly eccentric angle, (from the position Berkeley himself recommends), the statement (1) does look like evidence for saying that physical things consist only of ideas. To put it another way, the necessary truth that it is logically impossible to experience anything but experiences is interpreted as a truth about the physical world, to mean that nothing as a matter of fact exists in the world except experiences. Berkeley's reason (1) is a reason for conclusion (2) if and only if we play his metaphysical game and make the tautology do the work normally done by a statement of fact about what exists.

Having made point (2), an opportunity has been created for Berkeley. (2) as it stands conflicts with the common conviction we all share which is expressed in (3). Physical things, almost by definition, and certainly by vulgar opinion, do not depend for their existence in the world on the presence of any sentient creature. The madness of solipsism struck Berkeley as it strikes most people.

Berkeley wishes to accommodate the commonsense faith, not to deny it. But he turns the concession he makes to commonsense into a reason for believing in the existence of a divine percipient, for accepting (4) This is even more bizarre than giving (1) as a reason for holding (2). We are now told that a true empirical statement, "All sane people believe that mountains and penguins exist independently of their experience", is evidence for the truth of the statement that God exists and continually apprehends what we perceive.

It is sometimes said that Berkeley's notion of God is dragged in to patch up some holes in the fabric of his theory. I suspect that this is a misjudgment. It seems that the contrary is true, that the holes in the early part of his theory are made in order to leave room for a divine percipient. It is worth remembering what so many of his current admirers forget, that Berkeley's main motive was to refute atheists. It seems that Berkeley led up to point (4) deliberately. He reconciles the sense-datum picture of our experience of the external world, and his esse est percipi principle, with the common notion that physical objects are mind-independent, by asserting "There is therefore some other will or spirit that produces them." [16] In this way, he builds up presuppositions which make (3) look like a good reason for believing (4).

In terms of Berkeley's own system, the assertion of the existence of a divine percipient is established by his argumentation. But this conclusion is not 'established' according to ordinary criteria for judging that a proposition has been proved. It is not established with reference to the laws of logic or the occurrence of particular facts and events in the material world. We can only regard (1) and (3) as reasons for believing (2) and (4) within the context of Berkeley's system, by making certain interpretations and sharing certain presuppositions. It begins to look as if in order to agree

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16. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 53 (PRINCIPLES, para. 29)
Cf. Luce, op. cit, p. 69: "Berkeley's reticence about God is conscious art; he unfolds his theology gradually. You think he is building a house; you find he has built a church."

that Berkeley's proffered evidence is evidence, it is not enough to read it; we have to read something into it.

It is at least evident that Berkeley's reasons for believing his metaphysical statements would not, in the contexts of non-speculative philosophical thought, be considered good ones. For their connection with what they are said to imply is very thin if we have in mind ordinary connections between reasons and conclusions - either logical or contingent ones. It may then be suggested that this is simply because they are bad reasons. It is difficult to be convinced, however, that they are like ordinary bad reasons.

It would be a bad reason for believing that the train will be late to assert that it is July 27th, since experience reveals no correlation between this date and delayed trains. Berkeley's cannot be this sort of bad reason; it is absurd, for example, to ask ourselves, "Have I found that a physical object is more than a group of sense-data whenever I directly apprehend nothing but sense-data?": compare "Have I found that my train is late whenever it is July 27th?" If I can answer 'no' truthfully to the second question, I detect a bad reason. But the first question does not even make sense, and I cannot answer either 'yes' or 'no' comfortably. Suppose then that Berkeley's reasoning is simply bad logic; then we should say that the tautology about direct perception does not entail the statement about the composition of material things. It does not entail it, within the context of ordinary speech. For within this context, (if it is proper to say that we could place Berkeley's reasoning in it at all), "Direct apprehension of sense-data is all I have when I directly perceive physical things, but physical things are not collections of sense-data" is not an inconsistent statement, as, for example, "Visual sensations are all I have when I see colours, but I see colours without having visual sensations" is inconsistent.

But Berkeley makes an entailment relation between the tautology and the statement about the constitution of physical things, and makes the assertion of the one together with the denial of the other result in self-contradiction. If 'physical thing' is to mean 'sensible

thing', and 'perceive' is to mean 'sense', we can substitute for the statement concerned: "When I sense a sensible thing I sense nothing but a sensible thing, therefore a sensible thing is no more than a sensible thing". To deny the second statement of this combination, while affirming the first, would of course result in self-contradiction. Because the words 'physical object' and 'perceive' have been given certain meanings, it is self-contradictory to assert that when we perceive physical things we apprehend only sense-data, but that physical things are nevertheless more than sense-data, although this would not be self-contradictory if we had in mind the more usual meanings of the words, and not those Berkeley gives to them.

It is silly to say that Berkeley had bad reasons for his conclusions on the grounds that they are not couched in language which would make them good reasons outside the context of his system with its special set of definitions. For they are not meant to function anywhere but within his system. They are not bad reasons; they are metaphysical reasons. They function as evidence for certain conclusions if they are interpreted in a special way - e.g. if we interpret, in the example above, 'physical thing' to mean 'sensible thing' and 'perceive' to mean 'directly apprehend'. If we do this, we are not guilty of linguistic abuse, only of using a linguistic device for a particular purpose, i.e. to establish a metaphysical conclusion within the context of a metaphysical system.

The necessary truth about direct perception which Berkeley regards as a reason for saying that physical things consist of percepts is, oddly enough, regarded by Locke as a reason for saying that they do not. This, I think, indicates further that we shall not understand the nature of metaphysical argumentation if we do not resist the temptation to cpmpare it with the argumentation of science or mathematics. If two competent mathematicians drew an opposite conclusion about a property of a geometrical figure which they both claimed was entailed by its definition, one of them would most certainly have made a mistake. If two scientists drew conflicting conclusions from the same test

results, they would assume that one had drawn the right conclusions and not the other; the matter would be decided by further observation and analysis. But in the case of Locke and Berkeley, who draw conflicting conclusions from the same tautology about perception, it is impossible to give this sort of concrete meaning to the assertion that one must have made a mistake, or that one must have drawn 'the wrong' conclusion.

Just as Berkeley's reasons function as such only if we follow his presuppositions, so Locke's reasons require, if they are to be accepted at all, a certain way of looking at the necessary truth, i.e. a determination not to equate the meaning of 'physical thing' with the meaning of 'sensible thing'.

I noted before that Locke and Berkeley both base their speculative conclusions on the nominalist presuppositions about our knowledge of the external world. They both assume that this knowledge consists basically of discrete sense-experiences. Locke, with his aim to plot the limits of knowledge, sees as an alternative to the egocentric predicament which the nominalist picture suggests the possibility that the external world exists beyond the scope of sense-knowledge. The sharp distinction which results from his presuppositions between the experience of temporary, shifting, disordered sense-data and the externally ordered physical things cries out for explanation. Common beliefs that images are different from veridical percepts, that we do not dream up the chairs and tables in the room as we dream up their images in our minds, that things <u>have</u> colours and shapes, appear to Locke to be ample evidence for believing that material reality is not identical with the uncommonsensical world of 'ideas'. But the very same considerations seemed to Berkeley to be arguments for the existence of a divine mind.

The Locke-Berkeley dispute seems to be a situation in which two people with very different outlooks pay attention to the same set of statements, facts, beliefs and assumptions about our experience of the world, yet place different interpretations upon them. We might say that there are no reasons for accepting either theory;

yet each gives many pages of reasons. We might say they are not convincing reasons, but then it seems that they are not the sort of arguments which could be convincing in themselves, and in order to feel convinced it would be necessary to enter into the spirit of the appropriate context, and agree, for example, to redefine certain terms, or look at the material from which the views are built from a certain angle.

We cannot strictly say that the dispute is about physical things, and whether they are made of imperceptible substance or groups of ideas, for this suggests that some appeal to the characteristics of physical things is possible which would serve to refute one or both of the disputants. No such appeal could count, however, since the terms of reference make it logically impossible to experience anything whatever which would confirm or discredit either view. Similarly, the abstract ideas dispute is not strictly speaking about the function of general words; no fact about this function is denied by either side, and consequently no fact can be brought forward to contest either conclusion. The dispute is made to sound, at times, as if it were directly concerned with describing certain facts. Yet in the end we find that both metaphysicians advance a priori conclusions which are out of reach of any facts.

It is possible that we shall explain the a priori conclusion and argument which in these views is constantly mixed with an appeal to fact, common belief, and plain sense, and also the irresolvability of the dispute, if we suggest that Locke and Berkeley interpret the material world, rather than describe it, in an attempt to say, not how it is describable, but how it ought to be described. I shall examine this suggestion in some more detail.

One puzzling feature of metaphysical style is exemplified in Berkeley's invitation to his readers to "try to separate in his own thoughts the being of a sensible thing from its being perceived"[17], i.e. to conduct an introspective experiment, when all the while, by

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17. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 43 (PRINCIPLES, para. 6)

definition, he has made the success of the experiment logically unattainable. For, as he says a little later, to imagine or to think of is, on his terms, to perceive, and:

> "When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas." 18

Locke suggests at one point that substance is a commonsense hypothesis, and that if we were to introspect we should find ourselves assuming its existence.

> "not imagining how these simple ideas can subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose ..." 19

However, should anyone deny that he himself makes this assumption, that something underlies sensory qualities and that thing is substance, Locke is ready to put the matter once and for all out of the reach of matter-of-fact reports. He is ready to make statements in tones of final authority:

> "The particular bulk, figure, number and motion of the parts of snow or fire are really in them, - whether anyone's senses perceive them or no." 20

I believe that if the dispute is regarded as one about how the material world ought to be described, as opposed to how it normally is described, it is possible to begin to explain its mixed logical style and its irresolvability. If we persist in making an analogy between metaphysics and empirical enquiry, it is hard to see why Locke and Berkeley attached an air of certain truth to their conclusions, yet reached rival hypotheses from the same empirical considerations. If, on the other hand, we draw an analogy between metaphysics and mathematics, it is hard to see why they placed such value on the appeal to matter of fact, ordinary belief, and introspective evidence. But suppose that Locke and Berkeley were urging us to see the world in a certain way, to accept a certain interpretation of it, in terms of how they felt it ought to be described, then it may be helpful to compare their dispute with this sort of case:

18. ibid., p. 50 (PRINCIPLES, para. 23)
19. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 390 - 391 (Bk. II, Ch. 23) my italics
20. ibid., p. 174 (Bk. II, Ch. 8) my italics

Someone might say: "Life really is a dome of many-coloured glass which stains the white radiance of eternity", and someone else might retort: "I disagree entirely, it is a dome of many-coloured glass which reveals the white radiance of eternity". Both these people are using metaphor as a device to express what they feel life is really like. In this type of dispute, it is no good at all to be commonsensical or matter-of-fact. If we interrupted the argument by saying: "It all depends what eternity is supposed to be", or "It depends whose life you are talking about", we should doubtless be considered cynical. Such disagreements are not about facts, or at least, if they are, their relation to facts is very indirect. They are primarily clashes of attitude. On this analogy, we would accept or reject a metaphysical view, have sympathy or antipathy towards it, but remain incapable of producing a conclusive confirmation or refutation of it. It may all be a matter of intellectual rapport, of certain attitudes or outlooks which are expressible in saying that the material world is really like this, or like that. In less professional moments, even professional philosophers have been heard to say "I like Locke", "I prefer Berkeley", etc., where clearly the men themselves are not referred to, but their views, or the general impressions their views give.

Then the dispute between Locke and Berkeley may turn out to be a clash of attitude which expresses itself in a clash between two irreconcilable persuasive pictures of the world, two conflicting feelings about how it ought to be described, or how it ought to be intellectually savoured. If so, clearly the a priori manner will give to the conclusions that air of finality to be expected of someone who has some emotional attitude at stake in his argumentation. On the other hand, the appeal to facts and common beliefs about the world and the empirical manner will help to create the impression that it is the material world which is really such-and-such.

I shall attempt to give my suggestions a firmer outline by inventing a non-philosophical dispute which would have the same structure as I believe what will turn out to be the skeleton of the

Locke-Berkeley dispute.

Suppose a historian writes a paper attacking the writings of other historians who say that the Battle of Gettysburg is the one at which General Lee's army was defeated by Union forces. Suppose this historian's attack consists of saying that Lee's army was not defeated at this battle, but only retreated to the Potomac River for a well-earned rest. "Retreated", he contends, does not mean the same as "defeated". An army is only defeated when there is no part of it left which is capable of retreating. While you are in a position to retreat, you are not defeated. Therefore, he continues, the Confederate Army was never defeated.

This man's fellow historians would undoubtedly feel that he had thrown no light on the history of the American Civil War. They would accuse him of holding a purely personal opinion about the meaning of the word "defeated". Yet suppose, for the sake of argument, that this historian was quite earnest and serious. Suppose he was neither joking, nor playing a game to annoy his colleagues. Then, we should feel, he must surely have a reason for advocating a new sense in this context for the word "defeated". He surely was not restricting the standard usage simply for the sake of doing so, like the man who called his stick a "sword" simply because he was tired of calling it a "stick".

In all probability the historian would then turn out to be a member of an old Southern family, with an ancestor 'murdered' by the Union forces, and a home background charged with the emotions and outlooks rampant in the Southern States during the nineteenth century. It may then occur to his fellow historians that, far from being generally prejudiced against the customary use of the word "defeated", he disliked its use in this particular context, since changing its use a little enabled him to interpret the same historical facts in a way more agreeable to his attitude. The point here is that this eccentric historian does not deny any of the facts or probabilities of the historical situation known as the Battle of Gettysburg. He simply interprets them differently, and gives them a new significance. He

emphasises the retreat of the army, which is less upsetting to him than the more conventional emphasis which is placed upon its defeat. The fact that he restricts the ordinary meaning of the word 'defeated' in order to do this is incidental, except so far as it shows that he has not discovered new facts, but achieves his effect by verbal manipulation. He wrote his paper because of his hesitation, no doubt due to a complicated set of sociological and psychological factors, to admit that the South lost battles, while he was not sufficiently mendacious to deny that at least they were put at a considerable disadvantage by Lincoln.

I think it is helpful to say that although "Lee's Army was not defeated at Gettysburg, it merely retreated" is a statement which cannot be refuted or confirmed by the historical facts alone, (none of which are denied), it is nevertheless a statement which has some relation to those facts. It is not nonsensical or a piece of pure fiction. It is, in some sense, a statement about an actual army at an actual battle, and it asserts something about what happened without denying anything that really did happen. If we ask what the relation is that this statement has to the facts, the answer seems to be that it is one of reinterpretation in the service of a special attitude towards them. Our mythical historian is not giving a plain description of the facts, he is interpreting them in accordance with the way they strike his imagination, and with the part his prejudices or interests play.

We might now wonder whether Berkeley's special meanings for 'idea' and 'perceive', the first narrower than contemporary philosophical usage, and the second wider than ordinary usage, are given for the same sort of reasons that the historian had for his alteration of the applicability of 'defeated'. Berkeley, no more than the historian is changing the significance of terms purely for the sake of doing so. Berkeley, like the historian, seems to have a special attitude towards the subject-matter of the dispute, although it is a more complicated one. Berkeley has definite notions about how the material world ought to be described as the historian had about how the Battle of Gettysburg

ought to be described. It may be that Berkeley too reinterprets the facts in a way which is expressive of an attitude or motive, or both, and in a way which places his reinterpretations beyond the possibility of being refuted by reference to the facts. For, as I have tried to show and will attempt to show further, Berkeley denies no facts.

It is perhaps unfashionable to take seriously the theological claims made by a metaphysician. Consequently some of Berkeley's more sophisticated modern admirers overlook the strong language he uses to express his religious sentiments. As I have mentioned, Berkeley's explicit motive is to prove that God is the direct cause of all sense-experience, or at least of all veridical sense-experience. I have also said that his postulation of a divine percipient does not appear to be simply a convenient way of taking account of certain commonsense beliefs. If it were, his defence of commonsense would certainly create more problems than it solved. It seems more plausible that Berkeley deliberately led up to the need to account for commonsense faith, for example in the human-mind-independence of physical things, in order to 'prove the existence' of, or to provide a role in his scheme of things for, a divine percipient.

Berkeley makes it quite evident how desirable he felt it was to establish the existence of a cognitive God. Passages to exemplify his main motive can be collected almost at random from his principal book:

> "It seems to be a general practice of the unthinking herd that they cannot see God ... but alas we need only open our eyes to see the sovereign Lord of all things with a more full and clear view than we do any of our fellow creatures." 21
>
> ".. we do at all times and in all places perceive manifest tokens of the divinity." 22
>
> ".. I shall esteem them (my labours) altogether useless and ineffectual, if by what I have said I cannot inspire my readers with a pious sense of the presence of God." 23

21. Berkeley, op. cit., p. 108 (PRINCIPLES, para. 148)
22. ibid., p. 109 (PRINCIPLES, para. 148)
23. ibid., p. 113 (PRINCIPLES, para. 156)

> "And it is the searching after and endeavouring to understand those signs instituted by the Author of Nature, that ought to be the employment of the natural philosopher, and not the pretending to explain things by corporeal causes; which doctrine seems to have much estranged the minds of men from that active principle, that supreme and wise spirit, 'in whom we live, move, and have our being'". [24]

In these passages, Berkeley uses the language of the zealot with a mission, and not the plain descriptive terms of the scientist, linguistic analyst, or logician. He speaks of inspiring his readers, and of what ought to be the employment of natural scientists.

Before drawing some tentative conclusions about Berkeley's aims, let us examine Locke's motives a little more fully. Locke, like Berkeley, quite explicitly stated his aim:

> "If, by this enquiry into the nature of the understanding, I can discover the powers thereof; how far they reach; to what things they are in any degree proportionate; and when they fail us, I suppose it may be of use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension; to stop when it is at the utmost extent of its tether; and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities." 25

This motive is fulfilled, for example, by his conclusion that we are:

> "ignorant of the several powers, efficacies, and ways of operation, whereby the effects which we daily see are produced." 26

Although Locke was influenced and excited by his scientist friends, Boyle and Newton for example, and lived at a time when the mathematical treatment of natural phenomena described in terms of universal laws and denuded of particular sensory qualities seemed so promising, his main philosophical interest was to advocate sceptical caution:

> "But as to a perfect science of natural bodies, (not to mention spiritual beings), we are, I think, so far from being capable of any such thing, that I conclude it lost labour to seek after it." 27

His metaphysical message is unmistakably a plea for intellectual humility, and for a belief that the material world is infested with

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24. ibid., pp. 69 - 70 (PRINCIPLES, para. 66): Berkeley's favourite biblical text is quoted again in Principles, para. 149
25. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 28 (Introduction)
26. ibid., Vol. II, p. 215 (Bk. IV, Ch. 3)
27. ibid., p. 223 (Bk. IV, Ch. 3)

mysteries into which we cannot, and should not therefore attempt, to pry. There is also the hint that even supposing we were capable of attaining knowledge about the ultimate constitution of Matter, there would not be much value in it. The smith and the jeweller know more about the nature of iron or diamonds than the philosopher - (more about their 'nominal essences')[28], and these complex ideas of things which we attain are sufficient for all practical purposes. Even supposing philosophers, or scientists, could detect something about the 'hidden' substances which Locke calls real things, no useful purpose would be served. Locke is anxious to persuade us not only how ignorant we must always be, but also how we lose no practical gain by our ignorance. We should "sit down in a quiet ignorance" and rest content.

> "And if by the help of such microscopical eyes (if I may so call them) a man could penetrate further than ordinary into the secret composition and radical texture of bodies, he would not make any great advantage by the change, if such an acute sight would not serve to conduct him to the market and exchange." [29]

It is curious that Locke's interest in Newtonian science should not have given him a more optimistic outlook on scientific endeavour. His metaphysical impulse is to veil the world in permanent mystery. This impulse appears stronger than his scientific knowledge and interest, in shaping the metaphysical picture he presents. That picture reminds us less of the conception of a solid, impenetrable extended stuff of atomic structure, and more of Plato's Allegory of the Cave. The impression Locke conveys is of the world of shadows, cast by things we can never observe, while we mistake those shadows for the things themselves. [30]

Let us now reconsider the suggestion that the dispute between Locke and Berkeley is a clash of attitude and outlook. The picture of the world as a permanently drawn curtain hiding an unknown and impassive reality, which we imagine to be a reality rather like the

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28. See ibid., Vol. I, p. 393 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)
29. ibid., Vol. I, p. 403 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)
30. See The Republic of Plato, trans. Cornford, Oxford University Press: 1946. p. 222

dead world of Newtonian mechanics, upset Berkeley. He did not merely think it was false, he tried to establish that it was a self-contradictory notion, and he did this, surely, because he found it repulsive. Berkeley was aroused by the spirit rather than by the letter of Locke's text.

> "What treatment then do those philosophers deserve, who would deprive these noble and delightful scenes of all reality ? How should those principles be entertained, that lead us to think all the visible beauty of the creation a false imaginary glare ?" 31

> "Matter being once expelled out of Nature, drags with it so many sceptical and impious notions, such an incredible number of disputes and puzzling questions, which have been thorns in the sides of divines, as well as philosophers, and made so much fruitless work for mankind; that if the arguments we have produced against it, are not found equal to demonstration (as to me they evidently seem) yet I am sure all friends to knowledge, peace, and religion, have reason to wish they were." 32

Berkeley frankly expresses his antipathy to Locke's picture. It is possible that all his interrpetations, redefinitions, and the detailed arguments he produces to show that nothing can exist unperceived in the material world, are more correctly regarded as intellectualised but direct expressions of an attitude than as impartial criticisms of what he regarded as an incorrect description of matters of fact. This would explain how, in the abstract ideas dispute, he seems to ignore Locke's definition of 'idea', in terms of which Locke's view is not self-contradictory. The missionary is not interested in trying to see the heathen's point of view, he is interested only in urging the truth of his own point of view.

"The truth of his own point of view" is a phrase which we cannot take literally. The apparently a priori true conclusions which these metaphysicians reach - i.e. conclusions irrefutable by fact or logic - are, I have argued, acceptable as 'truths' only if we are also prepared to accept certain presuppositions and redefinitions of the systems in which they occur. Certainly to their authors they

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31. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 211 (Second Dialogue Between Hylas and Philonous)
32. ibid., Vol. II, p. 82 (PRINCIPLES, para. 96)

appeared unequivocally true. There is however a sense of 'true', (although perhaps it is too vague to be recommended with any enthusiasm), which is equivalent to "appears to me to be so", where what appears to me to be so is the sort of thing which cannot be falsified on objective grounds. This sense of 'true' is not applicable to conclusions which result from observations, investigations, or calculations which all rational beings will accept on the grounds of those procedures and what they show. It is the sense perhaps which Coleridge may have had in mind when he exclaimed:

> "The immense difference between being glad to find Truth it, and to find it Truth ! " 33

I am not yet sure, however, whether any useful purpose is served in the attempt to explain metaphysical dispute by saying that there is any sense in which it is strictly correct to call the views involved 'true', although I do believe they are irrefutable.

I must say something now, although it will anticipate what is to come, about the phrase I have used perhaps rather too glibly, "metaphysical picture". Many philosophers, in particular logical positivists, have declared that metaphysical views are meaningless. It is easy to see the point of this kind of declaration. Bewildered by the complete absence of the feature of testability, and, on the analogy with science or history, searching for a method by which metaphysical views might once and for all be judged, or some objective criterion by which they might be measured for truth-value, it is natural that people conclude, when they cannot discover any such means of testing metaphysical statements, that they have no meaning. A statement which is neither true nor false suggests a statement which is bogus.

But I believe that if we think about metaphysical views less on the analogy with scientific hypotheses, ordinary descriptions of matter of fact, or mathematics, and more on an analogy with works of art or aesthetic criticism, it will become evident that metaphysical systems, while not literally true or literally false, may neverthless

33. S.T. Coleridge, Anima Poetae, ed. E.H. Coleridge, Heinemann:1895. p. 220

be meaningful and in some manner effective.

This is the point I have in mind when I speak of Locke's and Berkeley's "metaphysical pictures", or "the impressions they convey", or "the attitudes they express". 'Picture' is, of course, used metaphorically here. But if we ask what effects these views have upon us, I think they can be correctly described in terms of this sort of metaphor. It was the picture of a hidden and mysterious material reality which aroused Berkeley's opposition, and produced his substitution of the picture of a spirit-activated, mind-dependent material reality, identical with the familiar world of sense-experience.

There is another point which is perhaps worth mentioning here, about ways in which the analogy with art seems appropriate. Metaphysical views, like paintings, can be sympathised with by people who have different motives for their sympathy. I shall try to show in Chapters Eight and Nine how, for example, Professors Ayer and Luce appreciate Berkeley's metaphysics for entirely different reasons. A plain description of matter of fact, or a scientific theory, do not produce this variety of imaginative response, among people who share the same attitude of interest or sympathy towards them. Consider, for example, Professor Luce's complaint that a fellow admirer of Berkeley had not, in some lines of his poetry, recognised the true Berkeley, and how extraordinary it would be if there were a similar difference of opinion about the import of a scientific theory:

> "The false Berkeley Yeats knew, as we all do, by hearsay; it is the Berkeley of legend and textbook tradition .. it is, in Yeats' words, the
>
> 'God-appointed Berkeley that proved all things a dream
> That this pragmatical preposterous pig of a world,
> Its farrow that so solid seem,
> Must vanish on the instant if the mind but change its theme'
>
> The Berkeley of those lines if not the true Berkeley, not the Berkeley Yeats really loved; for the Berkeley 'that proved all things a dream' filled no notebooks, published no

philosophy, never existed in the flesh." [34]

Luce's conception of the 'true Berkeley', who did not give the impression that 'all things are a dream', is probably the result of the fact that he shares Berkeley's religious motive, and takes more seriously than Yeats that aspect of Berkeley's theory which suggests not that sense-experience is as personal as dream experience, but that it differs from it by being a direct revelation of the divine mind. It is possible to stress one aspect of a metaphysical picture without blatant misdescription of the theory. Just as it is possible, without misdescribing a painting, to express appreciation for it in terms of one of its presentations, one figure or object in the portrayal, or one feature of its execution, which has a particular and personal appeal. On this hypothesis it does not follow that a person who agrees with at least one aspect of Berkeley's metaphysics, e.g. Professor Ayer, is necessarily one who has entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the system. Admittedly someone might prefer one view to another because of the kind of emphasis or interpretation he wishes to place on certain perceptual or linguistic facts or customs. But I believe wanting to emphasise or interpret fact or language is a sign that some attitude is being expressed. Someone who wishes to emphasise how physical-object statements are verified, and prefers to take less notice of the belief that they assert something more than how they can be verified, may well consider that Berkeley at least talks less nonsense than Locke. But the fact that this person should want to emphasise how physical-object statements are verified, shows, I think, that he believes that physical-object statements ought to be analysed in one way rather than another. The force of this 'ought' appears to be personal preference, rather than a result of impartial consideration of the uses we ordinarily make of physical-object statements. In order to produce, or to sympathise with, to defend or to attack a metaphysics of the external world it may be that a certain mental bias, a bent for entering into the

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34. Luce, op. cit., "preface", pp. viii - ix

spirit of pure speculation, is a necessary condition. Similarly, it is necessary to interpret events and character, and not merely to catalogue them, in order to produce or to appreciate a novel. The analogy with works of art may turn out to be a way of exhibiting how the metaphysics of the external world differs from its physics.

The Locke-Berkeley dispute, perhaps, is like a dispute between rival story-tellers. The theory of substance is like a very sophisticated and intellectual piece of fiction, which purports to be about the true nature of the world as Alice in Wonderland purports to be about the adventures of a living child. Locke's story about Substance, however, cannot be refuted any more than Alice in Wonderland can be. Either it will appeal to us, or it will not.

Suppose the authors of Alice and Wonderland and Gulliver's Travels were to have a disagreement about whether the first or the second story is the most convincing. Clearly by 'convincing' they would not mean 'true' in any literal sense of that word, since both books are fiction. They would mean something like 'convincing as fiction', 'good as satire', or 'achieves what it sets out to do'. Each would undoubtedly proffer different criteria, according to his attitude to his work and to the point of writing fiction, for the application of these terms. Their dispute would be irresolvable because it would involve not a conflict of testable claims, but a conflict of outlook. Locke's and Berkeley's stories are of course in many respects very different from works of fiction, as I shall try to show. They are more serious, the result of more general, or more basic attitudes to a very different type of subject-matter. Nevertheless, when Locke commented that "every thing does not hit alike upon every man's imagination", as quoted at the head of this Chapter, he suggested a clue to the riddle of the irresolvability of metaphysical dispute, which may be the same clue which explains disputes about the relative value of works of fiction.

Only tentative feelers have been put forth in this chapter towards an explanation of the Locke-Berkeley dispute. It would be unwise to pursue the hints further before a study has been made of some other examples of metaphysical theorising about the nature of the external world. The suggestions made here also depend on the assumption that the Locke-Berkeley dispute does not belong to philosophical history, but is still going on. This assumption, together with some of the others, will now be further examined by a consideration of more recent metaphysics.

CHAPTER FIVE

ALEXANDER'S ACCOUNT OF THE MATERIAL WORLD

> ".. in practice I am accustomed in thinking of Space and Time by themselves to keep constantly pictures of material things and events before my mind and then forget their richness of colours and smells and other qualities; and I recommend this practice to my readers." 1

1. Samuel Alexander, Space, Time and Deity, Macmillan: 1920. Vol. I, p. 39

Samuel Alexander envisaged the metaphysical study of the nature of the external world as a method of enquiry approximating to the kind used in the sciences.

> "Since, then, philosophy differs from the sciences nowise in its spirit but only in its boundaries, in dealing with certain comprehensive features of experience which lie outside the purview of the special sciences, its methods will be like theirs empirical." [2]

He explicitly advocates the odd combination of a priori and empirical style which was so apparent in the theories of Locke and Berkeley.

> "Let the examination be an empirical examination of the world in its a priori features." 3

The "a priori features" are those pervasive characteristics of things which "we experience" in addition to their non-pervasive empirical qualities.

> "The categorial is the pervasive, and the empirical is the variable or contingent". [4]

The metaphysical cloth out of which Alexander believed the world was cut is Space-Time. It would be impractical here to enter into a discussion of the intricacies of Alexander's views about Space-Time; the aim is simply to give a very brief account of that function he gave to Space-Time which impinges upon his description of the ultimate nature of physical things.

Space and Time are inseparable and continuous; we are told that Space is full of Time and Time is full of Space, each forming a perfect continuum.[5] Space and Time are also infinite. Their continuity and their infinity are said to be presented in our experience.[6] These characteristics are summed up in the following two statements:

> "Space-Time does not exist but is itself the totality of all that exists. Existence belongs to that which occupies a space-time." 7

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2. ibid., Vol. I, p. 4
3. ibid., p. 30
4. ibid., p. 343
5. ibid., p. 65
6. ibid., p. 40
7. ibid., p. 338

> "Just as a roll of cloth is the stuff of which coats are made but is not itself a coat, so Space-Time is the stuff of which all things, whether as substances or under any other category, are made." 8

Space-Time, according to Alexander, is the all pervasive material running through all existence.

Alexander's main contention is that material things are not, in any way whatever, mind-dependent. This, he believes, is shown by experience itself. Echoing Berkeley's phraseology while putting it to opposite use, he says:

> "the distinct existence of any object from my mind is attested by experience itself. This is a truth which a man need only open his eyes to see." 9

He goes on to add:

> "In sensory experience compresence with the physical revelation of a physical thing is brought about through the direct operation of the thing upon the senses." 10

We become aware of a physical thing, says Alexander, as a synthesis of its appearances to mind on different occasions. This sounds like the Locke-Berkeley contention that we become aware of physical things by noticing a certain pattern among our 'simple ideas of sensation'. But Alexander emphasises that the pattern and the qualities exist in the external objects in that very form in which we perceive them. He stresses that the percipient in no way causes what he sees.

> "The shilling in my pocket owes it to me that it is mine, but not that it is a piece of silver." 11

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8. ibid., p. 341

9. ibid., p. 16. Cp. Berkeley, op. cit.,Vol. II, p. 43 (PRINCIPLES, para. 6): "Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them." While Berkeley promises us that looking will show that nothing can exist unperceived, Alexander promises that looking will show us that things exist independently of being perceived.

10. ibid., p. 25

11. ibid., p. 15

A physical thing, on Alexander's view, is a contour of space which persists in time, and within which primary motions take place which are correlated with the qualities of that thing. For example, primary movements connected with yellow, and others connected with hardness, exist within the contour of Space-Time which is a piece of gold, grouped together according to the laws of construction of gold.[12] Sir John Cutler's silk stockings, darned out of recognition, are nevertheless the 'same' stockings since the configuration of movements within the space contour would still be preserved - they persist in time. "Organisation", Alexander exclaims in another connection, "is a great empirical fact".[13] This might be called the motto for his picture of the external world.

A physical thing, besides being a union of movements in a contour of Space-Time, is also a union of qualities, with which those movements are correlated. The unity is in each case supplied by the portion of Space-Time "within which the qualities are disposed".

> " Each quality inheres in the substance because it is included in the space which unifies the substance. Thus the proposition, this sugar is sweet, means that the universal sweet in an individualised shape, that is as a definite and particular motion, is found within the volume of the sugar." [14]

"The volume of the sugar" is the space-time which provides the unity to the qualities which inhere in it; this seems to be what Alexander means by saying that Space-Time is the universal stuff of which all things are made.

The question which quickly arises in the mind of someone familiar with Locke's doctrine is anticipated by Alexander himself:

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12. ibid., p. 270
13. ibid., p. 237
14. ibid., pp. 274 -275

> "There is no pretence of any mysterious support of qualities ... The support of qualities is nothing more nor less than the space-time within whose spatial contour they are united, they themselves being parts of the space, whose contour their configuration defines." 15

This sounds as if Alexander wished to say that qualities are identical with spaces, rather than, as commonsense would suggest, in spaces. We speak of things occupying spaces; Alexander suggests that they are spaces.

In the second volume of his book, Alexander introduces a somewhat startling analogy. It is drawn between the relation of mind to body and that of Time to Space, and also the relation of Matter to its qualities. Mind and body, says Alexander, are not two distinct processes, but one. Consciousness, (i.e. mentality) and its underlying neural bases (i.e. physiological processes) form a totality which is the mind. The mind is not distinguishable from its neural processes. Analogously, Time and Space are not two distinct things, but one indissoluble thing. There is no Time without Space and no Space without Time. The intended parallel seems to be that there is no Mind without Body and no Body without Mind. This strange pronouncement may stem from the 'fact' that time is always the time of something somewhere, and space is always at a time. Pursuing the analogy, Alexander comments that Time is the mind of Space, and explains:

> "I mean that in the matrix of all Existence, Space-Time, there is an element Time which performs the same function in respect of the other element Space as mind performs in respect of its bodily equivalent." 16

This extremely puzzling analogy is fortunately of no immediate concern here. But it does lead to comments about Matter. Alexander seems to hold that the element of body in a physical thing is the complex of motions which underlie its sensory qualities, and that the sensory qualities themselves are comparable to the 'mental element'.

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15. ibid., p. 276
16. ibid., Vol. II, p. 44

> "Matter, like Space-Time, contains an element of body and an element correspondent to mind which is its materiality, whatever that may be.." 17

> "Accordingly for me the sensible character of what we apprehend in the object, that is of the sensum, stands to the movements in a thing, that is to the primary determinations which underly it, in the relation of consciousness to its underlying vital process. The secondary quality is the mind or soul of its corresponding vibration or whatever the primary movement may be." 18

At this point in the exposition it might prove salutary to return to ground level, and examine some of Alexander's detailed argument for his conclusions about the nature, for example, of an apple, a mountain, or a tree.

When I sense a sensum, e.g. the green of a leaf, Alexander holds that the relation of my mind to that sensum is like the relation of a table to the floor on which it stands, a causal realtion between two distinct things.[19] Just as it is impossible for an external object to affect a mind without evoking a conscious act in it, so it is impossible for a conscious act to come into being without appropriate stimulation from an object in the external world.[20] "To know anything is to be along with it in Space-Time".[21] To be conscious, one must be conscious <u>of something</u>. I cannot see an orange unless there is an orange there for me to see. What I see is the orange, not merely the sense-datum, or the patch of colour which is all I apprehend in vision. This is because in the course of experience the various appearances of the orange are synthesised; but the synthesis is not of my making, it exists independently of experience in the union of qualities in Space-Time. It is an external substantial coherence which my mind <u>recognises</u> and does not arrange or invent.[22] Physical things, Alexander held, only owe to their percipients the fact that they are perceived,

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17. <u>ibid.</u>, Vol. II, p. 50)
18. <u>ibid.</u>, p. 59) The last words in both these quotations echo Locke's "I know not what"
19. <u>ibid.</u>, p. 83
20. <u>ibid.</u>, p. 85
21. <u>ibid.</u>, p. 87
22. <u>ibid.</u>, pp. 91 - 92

and not the fact that they exist.

> "So far as they are there, and in the form in which they are there, they are there whether they are contemplated by a mind or not." 23

Physical things would exist with the very sensory qualities which they now have even in the absence of any mind.[24]

For when Alexander speaks of the independence from minds of physical objects, he does not exclude their secondary qualities.

> "Our plain experience is that we do not see colours in our eyes, but only with our eyes and in the rose or apple."[25]

The rose is, in itself, pink. It is always pink, even in the dark. In the dark, however, it is pink in rather a different way from that in which it is pink in the light. Alexander has a somewhat bizarre theory that in the dark the rose's pinkness is a potential pink rather than an actual sensory quality.

> "When not active as a sensum or a sense-datum, the sensible quality slips into a disposition which is on the primary level." 26

"The primary level" is the level of movements within the contour of Space-Time with which sensible qualities are said to be correlated.

Alexander insists that all sensa or sense-data exist in physical space and not in the mind; externally and independently, not privately for the viewer. The appearance of the bent stick in water is as real, and as much part of the external world, as the straight appearance of the stick out of water. An image of the stick is as real and as much part of the external world as the stick itself. The huge appearance of the tower seen from close by it is as much of a real appearance as the tiny circular appearance seen at a distance. The mind, Alexander suggests, is a kind of mirror; it sometimes distorts, but in so far as it apprehends physical things or sense-data it never creates or invents.

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23. ibid., p. 95
24. ibid., p. 106
25. ibid., p. 140
26. ibid., p. 60

Illusion is explained by mental selection. The bent appearance of the stick in water is produced by the relation of the stick to the water, and the mind happens to select that aspect of the external relationship which, as we say, makes the stick look bent.

> "In itself the illusory appearance is as much object as the real appearance". 27

Similarly, an image of a golden mountain, Alexander insists, is real in the sense that it is based on reality:

> ".. however unreal it may be, all the materials are in the non-mental world out of which it is built, or, to put the matter otherwise, reality provides the basis of the imaginary object ... There may be no golden mountain in reality but at least there are mountains and gold." 28

The question of perspectives, the fact that the appearances of a thing vary with the position and condition of the percipient, led Berkeley and many others to find fault with the notion that a thing possesses its qualities, and to assert that a thing is a series of sense-experiences. Alexander sees the matter in a different light. He holds that all perspectives, the round and the elliptical shape of the penny, are synthesised in the real externd object, the "piece of real or geometrical space".

> "The real thing is not 'the class of perspectives' in the language of Mr. Russell, but it is that from which its perspectives are selected by the finite observer according to his position." 29

In a statement which sums up his opposition to Russell's view, Alexander says:

> ".. the synthesis characteristic of the thing is in no sense the work of the mind but discovered by it.." 30

There are two very different aspects of Alexander's metaphysics of the external world. There is the exotic aspect, illustrated by metaphysical paradoxes, by statements claiming that Time is the Mind of Space and Matter contains an element corresponding to Mind although physical things could exist in the absence of Mind,

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27. ibid., p. 60
28. ibid., p. 85
29. ibid., p. 196
30. ibid., p. 184

There is also a defence of commonsense beliefs or language, illustrated by his attack on egocentric interpretations of the external world: "Our plain experience is that we do not see colours in our eyes, but only with our eyes.." His exotic views intermingle with his defence of commonsense. They depend upon each other for the total effect which his system produces.

I shall attempt to sum up some of the main points which Alexander makes about the nature of physical things, and then consider them more thoroughly. The following points are representative of his metaphysics of the external world:

(1) The fabric, stuff, or substance of the external world is Space-Time

(2) Hence physical things are portions of Space-Time, in which their qualities are unified at a primary level

(3) Their sensory qualities are correlated with movements in the portions of Space-Time with which they are identical

(4) The relation of the sensory quality to the primary movement with which it is correlated can be compared to the relation between a mind and a body with which it is correlated. (Since Alexander believes that mind and body are inseparable, one process, it seems as if he also believes that sensory quality and primary movement are inspparable, one process rather than two things).

(5) Appearances of a physical thing - i.e. qualities which we sense - exist in the pattern which we experience quite independently of our experience, i.e. in Space-Time.

(6) Hence perceiving a physical thing is a situation in which a percipient is affected by an external independent body. The fact that he perceives the thing in no way determines its nature or existence.

(7) The existence of a physical thing is a necessary condition for the existence of a mind, but not <u>vice versa.</u> Alexander holds an evolutionary theory that minds evolve from things, which is not easy to reconcile with his other view that sensory qualities of things are like the minds of bodies. He may mean that mind is a later stage of evolution than primary Space-Time, although

both mind and matter are "made of" Space-Time.

Bearing in mind that Alexander stated that his metaphysics "differs from the sciences nowise in its spirit but only in its boundaries", the question arises whether his hypothesis so far as it relates to the nature of physical things is verifiable, with reference to the items of experience and commonsense which he cites as supporting evidence, or in any other way.

Alexander, like Locke, was interested in the activities and results of natural science. He comments, for example, that scientific results make it "not very far fetched to suggest" that the electron may itself be "a complex of motion",[31] which discovery would lend support, he feels, to his view that sensory qualities are primarily movements in a contour of Space-Time. He also cites psychological theory in discussing the psycho-physical relation. He feels sure that the successful metaphysician will be one who is familiar at first hand with some of the results of physics and mathematics.[32]

The bow to science which Alexander often makes may seem to give a certain plausibility to his view that the sensory qualities of a thing are correlated with primary movements in a contour of Space-Time. Another kind of plausibility seems to be given to his view by the appeal to commonsense. The plain answer to the idealist philosopher is that things like oranges, and their various tastes and smells etc., are <u>there</u> to be discovered by us, and in no way what they are because of us.

Yet Alexander by no means permits his answers to be either plain or scientific. He draws conclusions which are bizarre. The plain man thinks the colour is 'on' the orange; science declares that colour depends for its existence on light. Alexander seems

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31. <u>ibid.</u>, p. 54
32. <u>ibid.</u>, p. 53

to make the most of both worlds, and offers the strange view that the yellow is on the lemon, as commonsense supposes, even in the dark, but, as science knows, in the dark it does not appear yellow,as yellow depends on light for its existence; so in the dark the yellow of the lemon is potential, it has 'slipped' into a dispositional role. For all that, it is still really yellow, since yellow is, at the primary level, a complex of motions in Space-Time, and these persist through the darkness of the night.

This is a theory we cannot test. We cannot devise a way of finding out whether or not a lemon in the dark is potentially yellow. We cannot experience the movements in the contour of Space-Time which we are told are the colour of the lemon. Suppose a scientist could. It would still be impossible to tell whether these movements or vibrations are the sensory quality yellow at its primary level. For in one very obvious sense, often reiterated by Berkeley, the colour yellow - the sensory quality - is not a movement, nor anything like a movement. To say that when it is not a perceptible quality - e.g. in the dark - it is still the perceptible colour yellow, but at a primary level, is to say something which cannot be decided by observation or experiment. There are no facts to which we can turn, and there are none for which we can seek, since it is logically impossible to devise a test or have an experience which will show that a colour is really a series of motions. We might very easily discover that it is caused by motions, but this is a very different matter from discovering that it is identical, at least in certain situations, with movements.

Consider too the view that physical things are made of Space-Time. This we are said to be able to 'intuit'.[33] It is here admitted that we cannot test the claim by appealing to facts alone.

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33. see ibid., p. 147

Yet we need only open our eyes, thinks Alexander, to understand that what we see in no way depends upon our seeing it.[34] This suggests that we can refute Berkeley simply by opening our eyes. There is a very vague sense in which visual experience suggests that there is an external world which is in no way dependent for its existence or character upon my seeing it. But it does no more than suggest this, it cannot provide evidence for the metaphysical contention that the external world exists independently of anyone's experience, in the way in which calculating machines provide evidence for the contention that physical things can do sums without anyone's direct help. The reason why sense-experience cannot provide evidence is that statements like "The external world exists independently of anyone's experience", "The external world is really a network of experiences", are so comprehensive that there is no possibility of a refuting instance. The statements refer to everything material, and consequently there is no material thing which could be pointed out as an exception. Since there is no possibility of finding a exception to the generalizations, it would seem highly inappropriate to seek confirmation of them by studying our experience of the external world.

It is then most probable that Alexander cannot be refuted by a study of lemons and other physical things, and that such observations will not serve to confirm what he tells us. Evidence from observation is ruled out of the metaphysical court by the policy of making the contention cover all possible experience whatever.

Let us take another point in Alexander's account and ask whether his "hypothesis" allows the possibility of refutation by fact. All the veridical appearances of a thing, he holds, are correlated in the geometrical contour of Space-Time which defines the thing. At first sight Alexander seems to be talking commonsense, although it is couched in uncommon phraseology. It is the sort of commonsense we feel inclined to cite against Berkeley's or Russell's view. We are naturally inclined to believe that whether anyone sees it or not a lemon is sour, shiny, and yellow. But in a way Russell was quite right when he said this belief was unwarrantable;[35] our experience cannot provide a warrant

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34. See ibid., Vol. I, p. 16

to justify it in the way in which, for example, it can provide one to justify the assertion "This lemon is sour" made while eating a lemon. The best 'evidence' which Alexander could produce would be the faith of many people in the external nature of things and their qualities, suggested by common speech, ("Was Macbeth's dagger really there?" - "there" suggests that genuine things exist in space in a sense in which illusory things do not), and assumed in behaviour. But these matters are as much, or as little, 'evidence' for metaphysical conclusions quite different from Alexander's, and cannot be said to show 'the truth' of his view.

Although the concept of Space-Time in relativity physics is very far from being an 'intuition', in Alexander's metaphysics it becomes one, since he describes it as an a priori ultimate which makes the world what it is. To say that we 'intuit' Space-Time is to admit, it seems, that we do not experience it. It is indeed a well-known argument that we do not experience Space or Time, only spatial and temporal relations, only spaces and times. One of the earliest feats of the human intellect was to abstract from experience of times and places a conception of absolute Time and Space, of infinite and continuous Time and Space. Nevertheless, the statement "Space-Time is the matrix of all existence", as Alexander intends it to be taken, is such that the study of calendars or distances, of any experience of times or places, cannot serve to verify. In physics the concept of Space-Time does not serve as an a priori ultimate as it does in Alexander's metaphysics.

When Alexander said that Space-Time is the a priori feature of all that exists, I believe he was extending the significance of certain ordinary necessary truths. It is necessarily true that if X is a physical thing, it must exist in some place at some time. "X is a physical thing which is nowhere" and "X is a physical thing at no time" are either self-contradictions, or amount to saying in a roundabout way that X does not exist. Alexander's claim, however, is not merely the obvious affirmation that these necessarily true propositions - "If X is a physical thing, it is somewhere" etc. - are

necessarily true. If we suppose so, there is no explanation for his belief that physical things are made of Space-Time. He certainly intended to convey something more impressive than the truism that things are spatially and temporally located. His emphasis on Space-Time as stuff, like the roll of cloth from which a suit is cut, alone suggests that when he asserted it was the basic reality of the world he meant to do more than point to the linguistic fact that "a physical thing exists" means that it exists somewhere for some period.

Alexander's view, which in spite of his appeals to scientific method seems itself untestable, is not a meaningless view spun out of the air, or a mere string of fanciful statements about mythological entities. A detailed and definite, if paradoxical, intellectual picture is presented of the external world, although it is not anything like a photograph. It seems to be of the external world because it assimilates some commonsense and scientific beliefs about it, and its subject-matter is things and their qualities. Yet it is a picture, rather than a photograph, because the assimilation of the data results in some bizarre metaphysical transformations of the commonsense and scientific notions involved. Space-Time is said to be the ultimate reality which explains the material world, its order and its features. By this statement Alexander seeks partly to account for the commonsense faith in the complete independence of the external world from the activities of percipients. Yet by underlining the commonsense point he gives it a strange new garb which the plain man would not recognise. For example, the ordinary belief is made to imply that the image which I conjure up of the Albert Memorial is as real as the solid structure in Kensington. This result, which seems to offend ordinary thinking, is achieved by an argument from common experience, for example the argument that when I feel and smell an orange in the dark I can imagine its colour. Alexander interprets this as a sign that sensa and images can be substituted for each other, and consequently must on all occasions be equally real.[35]

35. Alexander, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 86

Alexander's main complaint against idealist metaphysicians was that they construe the world in the likeness of mental images.[36] It is this imaginative construction which he specifically wishes to replace. But as a result, his opponents might well say that he has achieved an opposite extreme, and constructed the world out of most unrealistic terms - limitless space and endless time, imperceptible events and vast abstraction. It seems that whether or not we have sympathy for Alexander's design will partly depend upon whether we wish to emphasise external material things rather than our sense-experience, or to rate the objects of perception above the activity of perceiving itself in the scale of metaphysical values. This may be a question of our imaginative response or general outlook, of a personal preference, for example, for thinking of the world as a unity rather than as a plurality of sense-data. It is interesting to find that Alexander himself explicitly appeals to the imagination as well as to the reason of his reader.[37]

Alexander's view about the nature of the external world is in many ways similar to Locke's, in spite of his own denial of what he would regard as this "accusation". This I shall attempt to show in Chapter Eight. If Alexander has affinities with Locke, it is Russell who comes quickly to mind as a twentieth century philosopher whose intellectual affinities are with Berkeley. Consequently in an attempt to trace the pattern of theories about the nature of the external world, the next Chapter will be concerned with a brief study of a view which was at least <u>once held</u> by Russell, and which conflicts sharply with Alexander's metaphysics. I shall then go on to enquire whether we can take at its face value the claim which both Alexander and Russell make, with totally different results, i.e. that they employ scientific method in order to produce correct results from their philosophical enquiries.

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36. <u>ibid.</u>, Vol. I, p. 24
37. See <u>ibid.</u>, Vol. II, p. 60: Alexander here appeals "without scruple" to Meredith's <u>Hymn to Colour</u> as support for his view that a colour is the 'mind' of its primary movements in Space-Time.

CHAPTER SIX

AN ACCOUNT OF THE MATERIAL WORLD GIVEN BY BERTRAND RUSSELL

"Regarded merely as hypotheses and as aids to imagination, the great systems of the past serve a very useful purpose, and are abundantly worthy of study. But something different is required if philosophy is to become a science, and to aim at results independent of the tastes and temperament of the philosopher who advocates them." 1

1. Bertrand Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World, Allen & Unwin: 1949. p. 7 (Preface)

For the purposes of this discussion it is necessary to select from the complexity of Lord Russell's views concerning the nature of the external world one of his theories. I shall concentrate on the early view he puts forward in Our Knowledge of the External World, namely that physical things are logical constructions out of their sensory aspects. This view is given background elaboration in his article "Logical Atomism", toned down in The Analysis of Matter, and partly rejected in his "Reply to Criticisms" which appears in the Library of Living Philosophers Volume devoted to his works. Although a fair exposition of Russell's thought about the external world could not be given solely in terms of his early work, my concern is limited to giving one of a view he once held, which is self-contained, lucid, and typical. This theory provides an example of a twentieth century interpretation of the nature of material objects which seems a direct descendant of a classical metaphysics, and it has a more appropriate place in this thesis than a historical account of the development of Russell's thought; although, of course, that development will not be completely ignored.

Russell gave the lectures printed in Our Knowledge of the External World following his success in applying a new method of analysis in the fields of mathematics and formal logic, after the publication of the Principles of Mathematics and Principia Mathematica. This no doubt partly explains the optimism and confidence which pervades his early attempt to apply similar methods of analysis to the traditional questions about the nature of external objects. The Theory of Descriptions, which had been successfully used to clarify problems in the foundations of mathematics, and also seemed to solve the philosophical problem of the logical status of non-existent entities, was at that time one of the most exciting new principles in philosophy. It operated by the mathematical method of reducing the complex and less basic to the simple and basic, on the maxim:

> "Wherever possible, substitute constructions out of known entities for inferences to unknown entities." 2

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2. Russell, "Logical Atomism", Contemporary British Philosophy, Allen & Unwin: 1924. p. 363

The success of this method in formal logic inspired Russell to declare that the new "logical atomism" - "the substitution of piecemeal, detailed and verifiable results for the large untested generalities recommended only by a certain appeal to the imagination" represented in philosophy the same kind of advance as Galileo introduced into physics.[3]

In this spirit Russell first considered the traditional metaphysical question, what is the ultimate nature of the material world ? He assures us that his answer , unlike those given in the past, will be "scientific" rather than "mystical", will be free from the taint of subjectivity, unlike those traditional answers which he believes to be no more than "pleasing dreams".[4] He says:

> ".. the new logic provides a method which enables us to obtain results that do not merely embody personal idiosyncrasies, but must command the assent of all who are competent to form an opinion." 5

The method for obtaining the new answer about the nature of material bodies will be logical substitution, applied to the facts of experience, and the invention of hypotheses "which only logic would have suggested".[6] These will serve as guides to the formation of correct and precise descriptions of the facts of the external world. Russell's approach sounds scientific - proceeding by hypothesis and verification. Yet it is notable that the kind of hypothesis he envisages is a kind which only the new logic would have suggested:

> "The old logic put thought in fetters, while the new logic gives it wings." 7

This new method of analysis enabled him to define number, but it is not the sort we should normally expect to be used to attain description of the material world. His hypothesis, it seems, will not be one suggested by the facts. From the start Russell makes it clear that he

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3. Russell, op. cit., p. 14
4. ibid., p. 39
5. ibid., p. 69
6. ibid.,p. 68
7. ibid., p. 68

intends to treat the concept of a physical thing in the same way as he successfully treated the concepts of number and class.

The facts which his hypothesis will be designed to order are those which most impress Russell concerning our knowledge of the external world. He describes some of this knowledge as psychologically primitive, and some as logically primitive. My immediate sensory knowledge of red patches, screams, cold, etc., is psychologically primitive, (knowledge by acquaintance), since it is believed "without the support of any outside evidence".[8] My knowledge that trees and tables exist when I turn my back on them is logically primitive, "in all men except a few philosophers", but it is psychologically derivative, since I only believe it "through having seen" those trees and tables - but of course not while my back is turned on them.

> "There is accordingly more need of justifying our psychologically derivative beliefs than of justifying those which are primitive." 9

The distinction between psychologically primitive and derivative beliefs, (between knowledge by acquaintance and by description), leads Russell to classify data into those which are "hard" and those which are "soft". It is absurd to have doubts about the existence of a hard datum directly presented to me, it is "luminously certain"; e.g. it is absurd when I have a headache to wonder if I have a headache. Yet it is not absurd to have doubts about the existence of soft data, those not directly presented in my experience; e.g. it is not absurd to doubt whether I see a tree when I see a tree-like form, since I may be having a hallucination, optical illusion, etc. Russell favours the hard data. They are awarded the basic function in his hypothesis about the nature of physical things. They have an aura of indisputability and are made the ultimates, the bricks from which all other knowledge of the world is constructed. What Russell quite explicitly sets out to do, when

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8. ibid., p. 75 & seq.
9. ibid., p. 77

he attends to the traditional question about the nature of the material world, is to see what sort of world can be constructed solely out of the hard data of sense and of logic. The general laws of logic seem to him to have the same epistemological status - i.e. certainty - as the immediate data of sense.

Russell's method appears Cartesian; he builds a theory out of only those terms which appear to permit no doubt. He fixes the contents of his description of the external world and then works out what that description will be. The traditional question, which was at the centre of the Locke-Berkeley dispute, is then asked in this form:

> "Can the existence of anything other than our own hard data be inferred from the existence of those data?" 10

It looked as if Russell would describe our knowledge of the external world and produce pure epistemology; but the form of this question, and the answer at which he arrives, suggest that he is to give a metaphysical description, via a description of our knowledge, of the ultimate nature of the world.

An example of a hard datum is "just that patch of colour which is momentarily seen when we look at a table".[11] The commonsense assumption that when we walk round a table we are walking round a single thing which has different aspects is a very soft datum, and has to be eliminated from Russell's hypothesis which will admit only hard data as its terms. Thus walking-round-a-table becomes:

> "a correlation of muscular and other bodily sensations with changes in visual sensations". 12

Such an analysis suggests to Russell a "model hypothesis" which he discusses as if it were a possible explanation of the facts.

This hypothesis suggests a description which Russell himself likens to Leibnitz's Monadology.

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10. ibid., p. 80
11. ibid., p. 83
12. ibid., p. 85

> "Each mind sees at each moment an immensely complex three-dimensional world; but there is absolutely nothing which is seen by two minds simultaneously." 13

The world is a system of perspectives, both perceived perspectives which are the points of view of individual minds, and unperceived perspectives which are not, at the moment, the points of view of any mind. The hypothesis that the material world is a system of perspectives leads to the definition of a material thing as a system of aspects.

A material thing, on Russell's view, is a correlation of hard sense-data which occur in a number of perspectives, i.e. in all the perspectives of those people who, we say, are "perceiving it". Russell then states:

> "All the aspects of a thing are real, whereas the thing is a merely logical construction." 14

It is interesting to notice at this stage another remark which he makes, which suggests that he has in mind a Heraclitean picture of the world:

> "In the world of immediate data nothing is permanent; even the things that we regard as fairly permanent, such as mountains, only become data when we see them, and are not immediately given as existing at other moments." 15

Mr. Chisholm wondered why it was that Russell believed percepts, e.g. a sense-datum of a brown shape, are epistemologically prior to things, e.g. tables. In his reply, Russell gave as a reason for choosing percepts rather than things as ultimates the fact that it is both logically and physically possible to have an experience which we would call "seeing the sun" when this experience does not have "the usual connection" with the sun.[16] I cannot be mistaken about what I see, but I can be mistaken about how I interpret what I see. I cannot be mistaken that I see something which looks like the sun, but I can be mistaken in thinking that it is the sun. Such facts seemed to Russell

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13. ibid., p. 94
14. ibid., p. 96
15. ibid., p. 109
16. Russell, "Reply to Criticisms", Library of Living Philosophers Volume 5, Northwestern University: 1944. p. 713

to suggest, in his early work, that physical things, about which I can make mistakes, are unreal. Even in his later modified version of the theory, he still stresses the importance of shifting sense-impressions at the expense of "fairly permanent" physical things. He describes a material object as "a group of events arranged about a centre".[17] Calling percepts 'events' further emphasises their impermanence. Russell continues:

> "There may be a substance in the centre, but there can be no reason to think so, since the group of events will produce exactly the same percepts; therefore the substance at the centre, if there is one, is irrelevant to science, and belongs to the realm of mere abstract possibility." 18

But this admission, that there may be a substance at the centre of a group of events which constitute a physical thing, is not taken very seriously by Russell, even in this later work. He still urges that:

> "percepts are always events, and common sense is rash when it refers to them as things with changing states". 19

In his early theory Russell attacks commonsense suppositions about material bodies with determination and vigour. To suppose that the wallpaper which fades through the years is a thing with different appearances at different times is "a piece of gratuitous metaphysics".[20] To suppose that when ice melts the water which replaces it is the same thing in a different form is simply a method for stating the phenomena "in a way which is consonant with our prejudices".[21] The common belief that mountains and the moon are fairly permanent bodies is " a piece of audacious metaphysical theorising."[22] Russell emulates scientific method by making liberal use of Occam's Razor. It is astonishing that the Razor should be employed to remove a fundamental belief of ordinary thinking which is reflected in ordinary speech - the belief that there are things which have qualities.

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17. Russell, The Analysis of Matter, Kegan Paul: 1927. p. 224
18. ibid., p. 224
19. ibid., p. 247
20. Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World , p. 112
21. ibid., p. 110
22. ibid., p. 107

Russell, Like Berkeley, finds no difficulty in proposing to think with the learned and speak with the vulgar:

> "We find it easier to imagine a wall-paper with changing colours than to think merely of the series of colours; but it is a mistake to suppose that what is easy and natural in thought is what is most free from unwarrantable assumptions, as the case of 'things' very aptly illustrates."[23]

Russell claims to clear up an old philosophical question by applying a new logico-scientific method. Let us consider some of the steps which he takes to arrive at his conclusion that physical things are no more than logical constructions from sense-data, from the bits and pieces which are said to be immediately given in sense-experience, about which it is pathological to have doubts. He tells us first that he has a new method, which will produce a theory free from personal idiosyncrasy, which will command the assent of anyone who is capable of forming an opinion. This method will be to obtain a hypothesis from logic, which will accurately explain the relevant facts. But what are the relevant facts, and what is there about them that needs explanation, and what sort of explanation ?

The relevant facts here seem to be facts about how we come to know that propositions about material things are true. For example, it is a fact that I know "I am cold" is true without the support of outside evidence, of any evidence but my feeling of cold. It is also a fact that I cannot in the same sense know that the thing I see across the road is a pillar box, since I may be seeing something which looks like one but in fact is not one.

These points, however, seem to me to be interpretations of fact rather than descriptions of it. Sense-data statements may not be as basic as Russell supposed. For example, it is open for someone to claim that I cannot know the truth of "I am cold", on all occasions, without appeal to outside evidence. In paralysis the feeling of cold would not be present, and the truth of "I am cold"

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23. ibid., p. 112

would have to be inferred from 'putside evidence'. It might also be argued that I can feel cold when in fact I am hot - e.g. in fevers. We might disagree with this type of argument, but there appears to be no misreporting of facts if a person wishes to say that inference is involved even in knowing the truth of sense-data statements, although, of course, it will be a different kind of inference from that said to be involved in knowing the truth of physical-object statements. The point is that Russell's 'facts' about sense-experience are beliefs about how we know red patches on the one hand and tables on the other; but the beliefs are disputable.

However, Russell assumes with complete confidence and long philosophical tradition on his side that in certain cases, e.g. when I see a red patch, I am directly acquainted with a hard datum, and I can know immediately that the relavant proposition about it is true without making any appeal to any other data. Refusing to take account of any but these items of immediate sensory knowledge, and inspired by logic, Russell states a hypothesis to describe the material world in terms only of these hard data. Since the facts to be described are these hard data, it is natural enough that the hypothesis 'fits the facts'.

Quite plainly Russell believed that his hypothesis was verifiable in the way in which scientific hypotheses are. He claims for it a difference from those large untested generalities of the past, which appeal only to the imagination. If it is verifiable, it should be a simple matter to refute or confirm it according to what we know of mountains and the other furniture of the earth. Yet it turns out to be extremely difficult, and I suspect beside the point, to verify by any observation the view that physical things are logical constructions out of sense-data.

Suppose we try to test Russell's account of what it is to walk around a table. By an almost superhuman effort of intellect we might decide that this experience is describable as " a correlation of muscular and other bodily sensations with changes in visual

sensations". Certainly walking round a table involves muscular and visual sensations, etc., and perhaps when we walk round tables we do in fact set about correlating various experiences. But this in no way supports Russell's theory, for he is not claiming only that as a matter of fact walking round tables involves having and correlating sensations. His claim, like Berkeley's, is much less trivial than that. He is claiming no less than that experiencing and correlating sensations is all that is involved in walking around a physical thing, and that this is what we mean, for example, by "I am walking round a table". He is claiming that "walking round a physical object" means no more than "certain sense-data are correlated". He claims that it is false to imagine that the phrase signifies that there is a single external thing around which we walk.

Many people "competent to form an opinion", however, would surely disagree. They would feel that there is a single thing, not a series of aspects, around which a single person, not a correlation of sensations, walks. Yet it is equally important to note that this common conviction fails to discredit Russell's view. What happens when Jones walks round his table is, in a sense, a correlation of sensations. But it is also a matter of walking round a table. What it also is, however, cannot count against Russell's view for the simple reason that he explains what it also is in terms of what we must admit it partly is. Russell's procedure is to translate the common assumption that there is a single thing into a statement that what there is amounts to a correlation of sensory experiences. If we say his translation is a bad one, he will retort that our assumption that there is a single thing is an unwarrantable one, and has no place in his 'hypothesis'. Clearly he cannot be refuted by repetition of an assumption which, however common, he rules out as mistaken, and which his view is expressly designed to avoid making.

We admit that sensations are always involved in walking round tables. Whatever else is involved can equally well be described by Russell in terms of hard data. Consequently any objection we bring from experience can be turned by him into grist for his own mill.

This is not the characteristic of a verifiable hypothesis.

Take, further, the case of the wallpaper. It is true that all we see over the years is a set of fading colours. Common speech and thought, however, indicate that the wallpaper does not consist of the colours, but that it has them. This Russell calls gratuitous metaphysics. He pleads that in the experience of seeing wallpaper no more is given to the senses than certain visual sensations or colours. But psychological description fails to support Russell just as it fails to support the opposing view that the wallpaper is the subject of its qualities. It fails to support Russell not simply because we can speak of gestalten as well as of discrete sensations, but because psychology has nothing to say about what the wallpaper is. Only philosophers argue about the ultimate nature of physical things without referring to their structural nature as revealed in laboratories. Russell's 'hypothesis' is not about the structural nature of things in this sense, nor is it simply about the psychology of perception.

The argument most frequently brought against the view that physical things are constructions from sense-data is that the subject of a proposition like "The wallpaper is coloured" cannot be equated with a series of experiences; "The wallpaper is coloured" does not mean "Colours are coloured", or "Pink patch is pink", etc. Russell's retort to this is that there is no evidence for saying that the wallpaper is something other than the series of coloured patches. And, of course, no amount of examining wallpaper, or statements about wallpaper, will serve to show that he is wrong.

Russell's fabourite appeal, however, is to logical analysis. Not every proposition which has a grammatical subject to which it ascribes a predicate has a logical subject-predicate form. Because "The table is brown" has a grammatical subject-predicate form, it does not follow that its logical form is similar. Yet the grammatical form suggests that it does. Russell admits:

> "It is extraordinarily difficult in considering substance from the point of view of logic to avoid being unduly influenced by the structure of language." 24

Suppose we try not to be influenced by the structure of language, can the logic of statements about material things reveal that material things themselves are constructions from sense-data ? Suppose that it were possible to replace the phrase "the table" with expressions which refer only to percepts without altering the sense of ordinary comments about tables by this substitution. This would not prove that the common assumption that tables are single things is false. All it would prove is that the common assumption is compatible with another way of talking, i.e. the phenomenalist way. For any substitute for the phrase "the table" would only be correct if it could replace that phrase without changing the meaning of the sentences in which it appears. In other words this substitution, if it could be made, and if its result were a correct translation of ordinary statements, would not show that tables are logical constructions, only that they can be described solely in terms of sense-data. And if they could be so described, which is doubtful, there would still be no evidence from the logic of statements about them to support the assertion that all the aspects of the table are real, whereas the table itself is a "merely" logical construction.

If Russell's theory that things are logical constructions out of their sensory aspects is to be verified by appeal to logical analysis, there are no facts which will serve that verification. If thing-words turn out to be replaceable by aspect-words in every case, this still will not confirm the view that they refer to mythical entities, nor will it refute the view that they do not. "Things are unreal, only their sensory aspects are real" is not a statement about symbols, it says more than "Thing-words can always be replaced by aspect-words". It says something about things, not about words for things. This is precisely how it excites and perhaps startles the reader.

Indeed if thing-words were eliminated from language a different

24. Russell, Analysis of Matter, p. 239

description of things would result. Yet we should be at a loss to know on what objective grounds to choose between the new and the old forms of expression. Russell himself was aware of this when he said, in another connection:

> "'C is a colour' will be replaced by 'C is a class of all entities having exact colour similarity with a given entity'. In this case, no facts can be conceived which would give reason for preferring one form of statement to the other, since any ascertainable fact can be interpreted equally well on either theory." 25

Russell himself, confronted with two possible descriptions, always has a strong tendency to prefer the more analytic one to the less analysed, e.g. to prefer statements about sense-data to statements about physical things.

> "The essence of philosophy as thus conceived is analysis, not synthesis ... 'Divide and conquer' is the maxim of success here as elsewhere." 26

Normally commonsense interpretations are the ones to which philosophers turn for support when they discuss the ontological character of the external world, and they are certainly the ones to which we feel inclined to point when we are informed that physical things are mythical and only their aspects real. Nevertheless, the moment we are tempted to do this, Russell is ready to charge us with indulging in stone-age metaphysics, in glib and thoughtless prejudice.[27] For the possibility of refuting Russell's view on

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25. ibid., p. 288

26. Russell, "On Scientific Method in Philosophy", (Herbert Spencer Lecture at Oxford, 1914), Mysticism and Logic, Pelican Books: 1953. p. 109

27. See Russell, "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics", (Scientia, No. 4, 1914), Mysticism and Logic, p. 148.
"But by the principle of Occam's Razor, if the class of appearances will fulfil the purposes for the sake of which the thing was invented by the prehistoric metaphysicians .. we should identify the thing with the class of its appearances." (My italics)

some objective grounds vanishes when he employs Occam's Razor to excise the commonsense concept of a physical thing.

In his more recent "Reply to Criticisms" he does seem to be indirectly aware of the irrefutability of his type of 'hypothesis'.

> "Mr. Boodin says: 'Nature does not consist in separate and distinct entities'. I fancy almost every reader of this volume will agree with him. But I must ask how he knows this ? He gives, so far as I can see, only two reasons: first that physics uses the conception of a 'field'; second that babies have no clear ideas. I admit both, though the second is an inference involving considerable theory; but I fail to see that either is relevant." 28

Mr. Boodin's remarks in defence of the belief that nature does not consist of distinct entities - e.g. sense-data - are perhaps not sufficiently cogent to seem 'relevant' to Russell. But the point is that any argument for this belief would be 'irrelevant', since it will in the nature of the case talk about things, and Russell on every occasion will have no hesitation in pointing out that such talk can be translated into statements about aspects or sense-data. He will go on to point out that his translation of plain statements about things is preferable, since it avoids making any unnecessary assumption, i.e. avoids speaking of single physical bodies for the existence of which he believes there is no direct evidence.

The facts will accommodate Russell's view about the external world or its opposite equally well, or equally insufficiently. Russell demands of Mr. Boodin, how does he know that nature does not consist of discrete items of experience; Mr. Boodin would probably have asked Russell, how does he know that it does. Neither could point to considerations which would once and for all decide the issue at stake. Russell's question is not like asking Mr. Boodin how he knows that sparrows are brown; he cannot point out anything which is, or is not, a physical thing identical with a series of its aspects, as he could point out a sparrow which is brown. It is more like asking, "How do you know that sparrows are not collections of sensa?" I hope I have indicated that this

28. Russell "Reply to Criticisms", loc. cit., p. 717

is not the sort of question which can be answered "to the satisfaction of all who are competent to form an opinion". Which is not to say that answers to it cannot be disputed; indeed, trying to answer the sort of question which does not have "a right answer" is one of the surest ways of generating a dispute.

Russell is concerned to bridge a gap which he thinks he sees yawning between, for example, the imperceptible particles of physics and our daily sense-experience. He chooses to bridge it by denying the reality of external things, which leaves intact the truths of sense-evidence and also points the way to the interpretation that the theoretical entities of physics are definable in terms of sense items.

> "The persistent particles of mathematical physics I regard as logical constructions, symbolic fictions enabling us to express compendiously very complicated assemblages of facts; and, on the other hand, I believe that the actual data in sensation, the immediate objects of sight or touch or hearing, are extra-mental, purely physical, and among the ultimate constituents of matter." 29

In a chronologically later passage Russell admits that his omission of the notion of single physical things is the result of facing a dilemma arising from the comparison of commonsense and physics:

> "Common sense says: 'I see a brown table'. I will agree to both the statements: 'I see a table' and 'I see something brown'. Since, according to physics, tables have no colour, we must either (a) deny physics, or (b) deny that I see a table or (c) deny that I see something brown. It is a painful choice; I have chosen (b), but (a) or (c) would lead to at least equal paradoxes." 30

It is as if there were, to parody Eddington, three different kinds of table, the physicist's, the one I see, and the one I talk about and use. Most of us would find no difficulty in admitting that the table I see and use, i.e. the commonsense table, is identical with the table studied by the physicist. To the plain man the physicist's

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29. Russell, "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter" (Monist, July 1915), Mysticism and Logic , p. 123

30. Russell, "Reply to Criticisms", loc. cit., p. 705

insistence that tables have no colour would not count against the statement "I see a coloured table". The fact that physicists say tables have no colour does not show that they have no colour in the sense that "I have a brown table" becomes a false statement. Tables having colour is the sort of fact from which scientists start. When and if a physicist says "Tables have no colour" he is saying in a very misleading way that colour percepts depend on light and eyes. This, of course, does not show that "I see a brown table" is false nor that "That's a brown table" is false. All it shows is that in terms of scientific theory the fact expressed by these statements can be expressed in different terms - light waves, retinae, etc. In other words, Russell's "painful choice" is artificial. There is no need to deny either that physics is true, or that I see a table, or that I see something brown. But the fact that he felt he must make a choice of two but not all these statements does indicate, I think, how much he wanted to eliminate a certain notion of material things from his map of the physical world. The symbols on this map must all stand, without any exception whatever, for events, or those fleeting, discrete and illusive items which he calls indifferently 'aspects', 'sense-data', 'sensa', 'percepts', 'appearances'. For, as he declares:

> "All my somewhat elaborate constructions are designed to reduce inferred entities to a minimum." 31

It is not altogether surprising that Russell's view turns out to be unverifiable if we remember how he chooses the terms in which he states his hypothesis, Those terms must all be 'hard data', and they are chosen with the specific purpose of avoiding giving any function to the common concept of a physical thing, either in the hypothesis or as a possible refuting instance against it. The ordinary belief in what sort of thing a table is, for example, is then

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31. Russell, ibid., p. 708

restated in terms of sense-data; once this has been done, the ordinary belief is not only transformed but made to look false, but because the ordinary belief is not denied - i.e. Russell does not say "Tables do not exist" in the sense in which "I have a table" would be falsfied - it is not something which counts against Russell's transformation of it. It is almost as though someone were to say: "It seems that x will always dissolve in water; anything which does not will not be called x; the hypothesis about x must be stated solely in terms of solubles." Such a hypothesis will never be confirmed or refuted, since any experimental results will be accommodated by it, and no experiment whatever could be conducted to produce negative results to refute it. Russell's hypothesis, however, is not vacuous or trivial, and this makes it very different from arbitrary pseudo-hypotheses.

Russell thought that the metaphysics of the past were valuable as "aids to the imagination". Yet it seems that Russell's own view is effective because it has the character which he attributes to traditional philosophy. His conclusions are stimulating because they have a certain appeal to the imagination. Commonsense assumptions about material things - unthinking, pedestrian, and monotonously familiar - appear to be undermined by Russell's account of the external world as a system of perspectives. Yet commonsense remains the daily guide. However impressed by Russell's arguments a person may be, it will still be natural to regard ice and water as the same thing in different form. Russell has made no discovery which will change our behaviour, our common beliefs, or our way of talking. Nevertheless, his view does something; it persuades us to reflect analytically about the nature of the external world, and to stress our own experience.

Russell undoubtedly believed his philosophy was scientific, but what people believe they are doing is not always the best guide to finding out what they are doing; few people would now contend that Berkeley had proved the existence of an actual percipient deity, yet he himself clearly believed that he had done so. An indication of the import of a metaphysical view is perhaps best obtained from asking

how it is likely to affect its readers. Berkeley seems more likely to produce a reaction to the picture he gives of a sensory world than a pious sense of the presence of God; Russell is more likely to produce a similar reaction than a pious sense of the advent of logico-scientific method.

One of Russell's favourite classical metaphysicians, next to Leibnitz, seems to be Heraclitus.

> "In such a nature we see the true union of the mystic and the man of science - the highest eminence, as I think, that it is possible to achieve in the world of thought." 32

Heraclitus, as the first known western metaphysician to present the arresting notion that the external world is a stream of brief events, where it is impossible to step into the same river twice and the sun is new every day, had something of Russell's outlook. Russell recognises mysticism as well as scientific curiosity in Heraclitus. He regards the fragment "We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not" as mystical, and explains:

> "Mysticism is, in essence, little more than a certain intensity and depth of feeling in regard to what is believed about the universe".

For example:

> "It is poetic imagination, not science, which presents Time as despotic lord of the world." 33

Perhaps it would not be too far fetched, though a little unusual, to say that Russell shared some of the poetic imagination and intensity of feeling towards the nature of the universe which he attributed to Heraclitus, but himself disclaimed. Russell presents us with a view of the world as a flux of sensa, governed by precise and interrelated rules, but in which solid, permanent objects are not permitted to exist. The present philosophical idiom, and his obsession with scientific and mathematical method, prevent Russell from the flights of fancy to which Heraclitus was able to soar, but in some

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32. Russell, "Mysticism and Logic", Mysticism and Logic , p. 11

33. ibid., p. 10

respects there are similarities between the two. Logic, rather than fire, becomes the magic principle with which Russell orders the kaleidoscopic world of discrete appearances; but he has the same wish to make the old metaphysical point that Nature is Many, not One; or, in his own idiom, that the business of philosophy is to analyse, not to synthesise.

Nevertheless it cannot be denied that Russell claimed to have obtained results which do not merely embody personal idiosyncrasies. And Alexander claimed that his own results differed from those of the sciences not in spirit or significance but only in the extent of their subject-matter. Further examination is warranted of what 'scientific philosophy' could be, if anything at all.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ALEXANDER'S AND RUSSELL'S 'SCIENTIFIC' METAPHYSICS

"By adopting scientific method, philosophers are to learn from scientists and mathematicians how to agree; and steady calculation, guaranteed to produce an acceptable answer, is to replace philosophical disputation. If some such hope as this inspired Russell .. his program was a failure. The merits of his views on philosophical analysis have to be argued on philosophical grounds; and to baptise them as 'scientific' can only generate confusion". 1

1. Max Black, "Introduction", Philosophical Analysis, ed. Black, Cornell University Press: 1950. p. 6

Alexander and Russell claimed to give a 'scientific' account of the nature of the external world. Alexander, unlike Russell, was quick to admit that he was writing 'metaphysics', yet he thought that what he wrote would differ from the sciences only in its subject-matter, which would be more comprehensive. He would examine "the world in its a priori features"[2], whereas the natural sciences only manage to examine particular features of particular classes of things. Russell believed that he was writing new 'scientific philosophy', distinguishable from metaphysics because its results would "command the assent of all who are competent to form an opinion".[3] They both thought that their philosophy was the result of employing scientific method, and they both thought that they were giving true accounts of what the world is like.[4]

What is this scientific method in metaphysics, and were Alexander making the same or different points in insisting that this is what they used ? Can we give any sense to 'scientific' as applied to their theories about material things ? This is, briefly, the questionnaire I have set myself in this chapter.

Alexander's 'scientific philosophy' seems to involve two distinct claims, which I shall discuss in turn.

(1) His study of the pervasive characteristics of the external world is by empirical method yet with a priori results - or this is what he tells us. 'Empirical method' here is not intended to mean procedure by observation, experiment, prediction, or verification with reference either to facts about physical things or by mathematical calculation. It is frankly an "arm-chair" empirical method.

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2. Alexander, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 30
3. Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World, p. 69
4. Russell believed that, like Alexander, he was a 'realist'. See "The Ultimate Constituents of Matter", loc. cit., p. 120: "My main position, which is realistic, is, I hope and believe, not remote from that of Professor Alexander, by whose writing on this subject I have profited greatly." This somewhat startling statement refers to Alexander's "The Basis of Realism", British Academy, Vol. VI.

The scientist meditating upon the structure of a molecule in his arm-chair may indeed, by sheer thinking, have an inspiration about it, which he puts to the test, or works out mathematically, all according to the precise rules of his particular science. His thinking is empirical in the sense that he is wondering about the relationship between certain facts which can, once thought of, be confirmed or refuted, entertained as probable or improbable, by following certain conventional scientific procedures. The conclusion of his thinking is such that in principle there is no reason why it will not be finally rejected or accepted by himself and all his colleagues. Now Alexander's empirical method is to be applied to 'a priori facts', for example the 'fact' that any physical thing whatever must be in space and time. To call his method 'empirical' at all is strange, but at least this suggests that having cogitated on the facts about the universal characteristics of the external world, Alexander will be able to prove, once and for all, to the satisfaction of all competent colleagues, that his conclusions are either correct or incorrect. At least it suggests that he will be able to do this by explaining those a priori facts, by making deductions from them which increase, or clarify, our understanding of the material world. This, without doubt, is what he thought he would do.

Yet there is something queer about the logic of explaining a priori truths about the world. What sort of thing will we count as an explanation of the fact that a physical thing must be somewhere and at some time ? When we wonder about this, we seem, as Wittgenstein would have said, to bump our heads against the limits of our language. It seems clear that if we ask for an explanation of this necessary truth we do not ordinarily expect the sort of answer which will shed light on the nature of the material world, the sort which, for example, will make us understand better what it is about books and spaces which makes it a fact that our mislaid books must be somewhere.

(2) The other claim involved in Alexander's 'scientific metaphysics' is that the results of physics, mathematics, physiology and

psychology, for example, have important implications for a metaphysical study of the world.[5] He believed that a metaphysician who was not equipped with some knowledge of these results would fail in his theoretical efforts. Metaphysics for Alexander is super-physics, the 'beyond physics' of Aristotle. He seems to believe that it can continue to explain the physical world from where physics leaves off. In this sense he would hold that physics provides the subject-matter for metaphysics, as the names suggest to many a layman. But we find that the concepts which Alexander does borrow from the natural sciences are so transformed when they become a part of his metaphysical scheme that they are recognisable only by name. For example, the space-time of relativity theory becomes something which can be 'intuited', it ceases to be a hypothesis designed to order a range of complicated scientific results and formulae, and becomes the universal stuff which metaphysicians of a certain school have sought to describe since the Pre-Socratic philosophers asked what the world was made of.

Again, certain scientific results lend credibility to the view that the colour I see on the orange is caused by a series of physiological events and light wave movements. Alexander, however, transforms this into the metaphysical theory that the colour is, at least on accasion, identical with movements in Space-Time, i.e. when light is absent. This is not a view which we can hope to verify. It only begins to make sense if we cease to think of it as 'scientific', 'verifiable', 'empirical', etc.

Russell, belonging to a totally different philosophical tradition, does not talk of making an empirical investigation of the a priori, but

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5. Russell, however, deplored 'scientific philosophy' in this sense. See "On Scientific Method in Philosophy", loc. cit., p. 96:

"Much philosophy inspired by science has gone astray through preoccupation with the results momentarily supposed to have been achieved. It is not results, but methods, that can be transferred with profit .. to the sphere of philosophy."

he does think that his method is scientific, and that he is investigating matter of material fact. Consideration of his method and his conclusions reveals an astonishing similarity in type to those of Alexander.

Russell's favourite use of scientific method is his frequent appeal to the principle of Occam's Razor. This axiom as it is used in scientific endeavour is readily understood. We can see the point of designing scientific hypotheses with the minimum number of terms; giving, for example, one name to a class of germs producing similar symptoms, rather than a number of names. It is a matter of convenience, and an aid to the use of testing procedures. But, as Mr. Warnock asked in a paper, what sin would a philosopher be committing if he multiplied entities beyond necessity ?[6] We are tempted to ask, beyond necessity for <u>what</u> ? The answer to this question is even more elusive when we consider how Russell used the axiom - "What is the smallest number (or type) of elements from which we can construct the universe?" - and how his use of it resulted in eliminating the concept of single physical things. He did not, as we should expect from the name 'scientific philosopher', examine the facts about tables and mountains before deciding that the common name for them and things like them should be omitted from his hypothesis about the external world. He omitted 'material object', (and by doing so ruled out the possibility of applying the phrase in its usual connotation to anything whatever), on grounds of logic. Reducibility, from the complex compound to the simple ultimate, worked well in mathematical logic, and he tranfers it without hesitation to his metaphysical study of the world. The method of Occam's Razor, borrowed from scientific methodology, and of reducibility, borrowed from mathematics and formal logic, are transformed by Russell when they are applied to the description of the material world. By the Razor 'physical thing' is deprived of its common application, and by reducibility it is replaced with words for sense-data. Like Alexander,

6. G.J. Warnock, "Reducibility", (Symposium), <u>Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society</u>, Supp. Vol. XXVI, 1952. p. 108

Russell, having done his armchair thinking, is left with a theory which cannot be tested. He leaves his readers, perhaps, with an uncomfortable feeling that it would have been best to keep Occam's Razor away from the concept of a physical thing. As Mr. Warnock has said on this point,

> "The philosopher is not multiplying entities by offering unwanted explanatory hypotheses; he is multiplying words by offering undesirable re-descriptions." 7

I would quarrel, however, with the use of the adjective "undesirable" in this context, for reasons which I shall attempt to make clear later.

Alexander's reason for saying that his 'empirical study' would reveal a priori characteristics of the external world, and their relation to each other, was that he sought universal characteristics. So did Russell. He sought a description of the external world which would be applicable to any of its contents whatever. Just as it would be pointless to say to Alexander: "But are all material objects really contours of Space-Time?", it would be pointless to say to Russell: "But are all material objects constructions from sensory aspects ?" I strongly suspect that Alexander would reply by making it sound as if we had asked him: "Are all material objects in space and time?", (which would be absurd), and Russell would reply by making it sound as if we had asked him: " Do all perceptions of material objects involve sense-perception?" (which would be equally absurd).

I take it that one thing at least that we can say about genuinely empirical descriptions is that it is always possible in theory to find something to which they do not apply and to which they are nevertheless designed to apply. But consider what we should be doing if we tried to find an example, even in theory, of a material object which cannot be correctly described as a contour of Space-Time, or of a material object which cannot be correctly described as a construction from sense-data. It would be more like seeking a four-sided equilateral right-angled plane figure which cannot be correctly described as a square, than like looking for a swan which

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7. ibid., p. 109

cannot be correctly described as white.

How then are we to know which of the views is right? Someone might say, "Of course they are both wrong. Physical things are physical things, they are neither made of Space-Time nor sense-data. Bulls are bulls and books are books. What is there to explain?" This possible, and not altogether uncommon answer shows further that the views are unlike empirical ones. Imagine someone saying: "Of course it's wrong to say water is H_2O and also to say water is H_3O. Water is water. What is there to explain?" The second is silly; but for the first many would have a sneaking sympathy without seeming in the least silly. The first is more rational than the second; the second shows ignorance, the first shows merely a disinclination to do metaphysics.

Someone else might say: "Russell is right. What <u>is</u> the wallpaper but a series of its aspects? I can't see that it is made of Space-Time, but I can see that it is a series of aspects. There is no reason for supposing that it is <u>an object</u> which was red last year and pink this year, but every reason for saying that the red patch I saw last year and the pink patch I see now belong to a series whose terms I relate to each other." The slightest acquaintance with philosophical dispute on these matters would indicate that someone else is then likely to say: "No. Alexander is right. He brings out the point that Russell missed, the point that the nature of a physical thing is not in any way influenced by our experience of it. The wallpaper is what it is whether anyone correlates its aspects or not."

It might be objected that these comments are old-fashioned. Then they can be reconstructed in the non-material mode of speech which is more <u>à la mode</u>. Someone says: "Russell is right, by which I mean that he makes an important contribution by urging that there is a philosophical advantage in replacing statements about chairs by statements about sense-data. This will cure people of the muddled thought that words like 'chair' are proper names for

things as 'John' is a proper name for a person." But again, there is very little doubt that another fashionable philosopher will retort: " No, Alexander makes a point, in an obscure way I admit, that Russell ignored. Behind his confused metaphysics, one can discern an attempt to point out that 'There is a brown table in the next room' does not translate without residue into 'If I were to go there, I would see..etc½' That there is a brown table in the next room does not mean anything about some future time, but what it says, i.e. there is a table there now, and it is brown now."

This sort of dispute has many sides and many idioms. It is so familiar that it almost becomes boring. But, as far as I can see, it has never been resolved to the satisfaction of all competent parties.

The conclusions of Russell and Alexander can be called a priori in two ways:

(a) Both present us with a description which is designed to apply to any physical thing whatever, actual or possible, seen or imagined. Now although the old view that all swans are white was doubtless designed to apply to any swan whatever, there was always the theoretical possibility that a swan of another colour would be found, that was indeed fulfilled when it was discovered that Australia had black swans. But there is no theoretical possibility that a physical thing which is not a contour of Space-Time, or a series of sense-data, will turn up. This is because whatever turns up in the world of material things can still be described in these metaphysical terms. "All swans are white" was not designed to exclude the possibility that swans might be a different colour one day, or had been a different colour in the past, or that some hitherto unobserved swans might turn out to be black, pink, blue, or any other colour. Yet the philosophical conclusions about the ultimate nature of a material thing are comprehensive, all-embracing, unlike conclusions about certain material objects, or certain groups of them. Metaphysical conclusions relate to the evidence by accounting for it all, and all it might be, and so, in a sense, by not accounting for any of it. This is, surely, a distinctive feature of a non-empirical claim.

(b) It seems to me that Alexander's and Russell's conclusions can also be called a priori because they depend for their air of necessity on genuinely necessarily true propositions, which are interpreted in a special way.

It is a necessarily true proposition that it is logically impossible for a material thing to be nowhere or at no time, as I noted in a previous chapter. Now no metaphysical statement is made until something is said about the nature of things. The ordinary necessary proposition does not obviously show anything about the nature of things, only about the definition of the phrase 'material thing'. Yet it is possible to think about this definition in a special way, as if it suggested that space and time must be essential ingredients in material things, rather than mere necessary conditions for the correct use of the phrase used to describe them. This seems to be the imaginative interpretation which Alexander makes when he concludes that physical things are not merely in space and time, but are space-time, and made of space-time. It is not a genuine necessary truth that they are; but neither is it the sort of thought which can be an empirical truth about the world, as I have tried to show. The fact that there is a genuine necessary truth which is related to Alexander's metaphysical conclusion, i.e. because looked at in a certain way it could suggest that space and time are inextricably mixed with material things, as water is mixed with mud, gives to his conclusion an apparent certainty.

Russell's metaphysics of the external world seems to be developed to a certain extent from the same genuine a priori truth which impressed Berkeley; that is from a proposition about our sense-knowledge rather than one about anything in the external world itself. It is logically impossible to be directly aware of a material thing without apprehending sense-data; it is necessarily true that perceiving material things involves having sense-impressions. Yet, as I tried to show in discussing Berkeley's view, it does not follow from this necessary truth that a material thing is composed of sense-data or sense-impressions. Russell decided to describe material things in terms only of sense-data because they seemed to him to admit

none of the doubt involved in inferred data. "What I perceive is what I perceive" may seem a trivial necessary truth, but it seems that Russell viewed this from a particular imaginative point of view, so that the trivial truth suggested that what I perceive (sense-data) have an ultimate and basic status in the world. Sense-data become, not merely the way in which I know about the material world, but the items from which the material world is constructed. The necessarily true proposition about our experience is transformed into a metaphysical statement which becomes imbued with the logical necessity of the original, but also claims more than the original, i.e. claims something not merely about the nature of knowledge but about the nature of the world.

Then what are we to say, if someone asks whether Alexander or Russell have given the most true, or correct, or enlightening account of the external world ?

Perhaps the difficulty in answering such questions is one which arises when the precise points at issue are out of mind, and perhaps it would be wise here to recall some of the conflicting details in the views of Alexander and Russell.

Consider, for example, the different interpretations put by the two philosophers on the relation between physics and the psychology of perception. I see a green book, and it is a perceptual fact that I see the green as part of the surface of the book. Yet the physicist tells us that the green I see is not part of the surface of the book, but something to do with physical and physiological events, although in the actual constitution of the book there must be an explanation for the fact that I see the book as green and not some other colour. Both Alexander and Russell had in mind that the perceptual situation and the account given of it in physics should be taken into account. Alexander fills in what seems to be the gap between the two by saying that a material thing is a contour of space-time involving characteristic movements which are, at a primary level, the sensory qualities we perceive. The book is green independently of my visual processes and of

light waves, etc., it is green in the dark, since these primary movements with which the green is identical persist. Russell, however, uses the need to bridge the gap between the world of physics and the world of sense by making it an excuse for saying that the bridge can be built if we deny the existence of physical objects as ordinarily conceived. We see a green book; physics denies that books have colour; therefore we do not see a green book, but a green shape which we relate to certain other sensory characteristics, thus constructing the idea of a single external object, the book.

Most people, I suspect, would not feel inclined to accept either of these metaphysical stories as the true account of the relation between physics and sense-perception. They would not feel happy about saying that the worlds of physics and sense are of the same type, so interrelated that they are almost identical, nor about saying that the world of material objects with which physics deals is only real in so far as it is statable in terms of sense-data. The difficulty is still, however, to know on what grounds we can say that neither account is correct. We might argue against Alexander: "When I say, 'That's green' I do not imply anything about primary movements". This would not, however, be convincing to him, since he is well aware that statements about the perceived colour green do not strictly imply statements about motion in Space-Time. This is why he defines colours as (ultimately speaking) movements in Space-Time. Suppose we then quarrel with Alexander on the grounds that his definition is wrong, by saying that, ultimately speaking or otherwise, colours are not movements, and the two are clearly distinguishable. Alexander would probably reply that unless we refuse to make the distinction, however natural it may seem, we cannot explain the cohesion of sensory qualities - for his purpose in identifying colours with movements is to explain how qualities relate to a physical thing.[8] The argument that in fact sensory qualities and movements can never be identical - even in cases where, as he puts it, sensory qualities have 'slipped' into potential roles - because in fact we clearly distinguish the two, would be powerless against his view. For him

8. Alexander, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 274-276

qualities and movements must be closely correlated, since his external world is permeated by Space-Time which is the stuff, among other things, of which material things are made, and since his fundamental theme is a denial that qualities are mind-dependent. If material things are portions of Space-Time, and also have colours independently of light waves and minds, then colours must be, at the primary level, movements. Now it is true that there are means of finding out that colours are physically correlated with movements , but Alexander seems to claim more than this, i.e. that they are, in certain circumstances, no more than movements. There is no way of finding out whether this is true by observation or experiment, since Alexander would readily admit that we never see the movements except in so far as we see the colours, and this rules out the possibility of refuting on grounds of fact the view that colours are movements. We can look closer at a flower which someone says is painted blue and conclude: "So it is, though it looked quite naturally blue." We cannot look closer at a blue flower and say: "It's moving, though it looked quite still" and be saying something about the nature of its colour. Looking at qualities, we will see qualities, not movements: but this Alexander never denies. Consequently we cannot say he is wrong on grounds of what we can observe.

Many philosophers would still insist that Alexander had made a mistake. But what is this mistake ? It is not a false description of experience, because he is not describing experience, he is putting forward a view about what lies behind experience. It is not a misunderstanding of language either. Statements like "That's blue" certainly do not in any normal context imply statements like "Those are blue movements", but Alexander did not claim that they did. "Blue" even in his system refers to the colour to which it is ordinarily used to refer, the 'colour-as-seen'. The fact that he makes it refer ultimately to movements in Space-Time does not violate ordinary language, since he does not deny that ordinarily it refers to the sensory quality blue. We might take the logical positivist way out, and say that Alexander is not wrong, he is merely uttering nonsense. We can attach no meaning to, there are no rules for the use of, a statement like:

"Qualities of a thing are identical with certain movements within the contour of Space-Time which is the thing". But Alexander's two detailed volumes on the subject supply a meaning and give rules for the use of such statements. The statement is only meaningless if it is taken from its natural habitat and examined alongside commonsense statements. In its context it makes sense, and to urge that it says nothing significant amounts to saying: "It's a metaphysical statement, not one we would use in ordinary conversation." Clearly Alexander's mistake cannot be that he uttered metaphysical statements, for he was doing metaphysics.

I shall now turn back to Russell's account of the relation between physics and sense-experience, to see if it is easier to find objective grounds for saying that he was mistaken than it is to find them for saying that Alexander was.

It would seem prima facie that the interpretation which physics puts upon, for example, the nature of a table provides a reason for claiming that the commonsense notion of what a table is like, based on direct sense-experience, is wrong. A table is not a solid brown thing, it is a pattern of energy, or etc. Yet Russell does not conclude that the real table is the thing described by physics as a pattern of energy, or etc., he concludes that the real table is a series of its sensory aspects. Furthermore, he thinks that his conclusion explains the relation between physics and sense-experience, and that the common notion that a table is a single thing is contradicted by physics, whereas his notion is not. Tables, according to physics, have no colour; deny that the brown patch we see belongs to a real table, and assert that it is the real table, seems to Russell to be the procedure for avoiding paradox. He believes that physics can be interpreted solely in terms of sense-experience.[9]

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9. See Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World, p. 117

"Thus it is unnecessary for the enunciation of the laws of physics, to assign any reality to ideal elements: it is enough to accept them as logical constructions, provided we have means of knowing how to determine when they become actual."

> "I think it may be laid down quite generally that in so far as physics or common sense is verifiable, it must be capable of interpretation in terms of actual sense-data alone." 10

Commonsense suggests that there is some sort of fallacy in saying that the table we see is "unreal" in any sense, for example in saying "The table isn't really brown, because physics shows that external objects are not coloured." But commonsense does not suggest that the best way to avoid the fallacy is to deny the reality of external objects, or to interpret them as logical constructions out of sense-data. This explanation looks wrong. Yet it is extraordinarily difficult to find grounds for saying that it is wrong.

Someone might say: "Of course Russell is mistaken, for he denies a plain fact, that there are material objects in the world." Yet, as I hope I may already have shown, this critic would not be able to establish that Russell denies the existence of any such fact. It is no good talking about sitting on chairs and smoking cigarettes in order to point out that material things exist, since these very examples only provide Russell with further instances of series of sense-data. It is no good pointing out that words like "chair" do not, as a matter of fact, stand for collections of sense-data, as words like "platoon" stand for collections of individuals, since there is a sense in which they do and no clear sense in which they stand for anything else. Russell cannot be decisively refuted on grounds of fact or language, and there are no final reasons for accepting or rejecting his theory in the way in which there would be for accepting or rejecting a mathematical theory.

Nevertheless, both Russell and Alexander insisted that their philosophy was 'scientific'. Plainly we cannot take this claim literally. The conclusions reached by Alexander and Russell are not established by even an arm-chair examination of the facts, they throw no new light on our knowledge of material things, they do not enable us to predict events in the material world, and we are at a loss if we try to find a way of verifying them. It is appropriate to consider what 'scientific' might mean in this context.

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10. ibid., pp. 88-89

In the first place, 'scientific' might be taken to mean what it normally means, appertaining to the natural sciences, i.e. those studies covered by the Royal Society. But this cannot be what it is intended to mean in this context, since no one would now class Philosophy as a natural science.

Another sense of 'scientific', sometimes attributed to philosophical theories, is that historically they have often been the breeding ground for inspirations later developed by natural scientists. Democritus held a crude form of the atomic theory of matter, which was later to be developed as a scientific hypothesis. Descartes preached the importance of painstaking observation and mathematical formulation, of order and measurement, which was to produce the beginnings of modern physics and mechanics, and was the method used by Newton in Principia. Examples of this kind are numerous in the history of western philosophy. Most of those ancient Greeks who started philosophy in the west also started scientific enquiry. However, the view that philosophy is 'scientific' on these grounds suggests that scientific endeavour only emerges after arm-chair metaphysical speculation has laid the foundations. Although it is a fact that some topics once studied only by philosophers, or once studied only by people who were called 'philosophers', are now studied by scientists, I do not believe that this can show that metaphysics is primarily concerned with problems which have become, or will become, the appropriate studies of natural scientists, leaving no topic which is a field of enquiry peculiar to metaphysicians. Certain questions about the ultimate nature of the external world, for example, continue through the ages to haunt the metaphysician, and they are not the type which scientists could answer within the boundaries of their discipline. Since no standard methodological procedure can be evolved for deciding on grounds of fact whether a material object is a bundle of sense-data or a substance, or whether statements about material things can be effectively replaced by statements about sense-data, the old metaphysical problem about material substance is likely to persist as one to engage the attention of metaphysical speculation, whatever advances science might make. Physics may build up an impressive body of knowledge about

the nature of matter, but it is still open to metaphysicians to return to their old problem by asking what relation this knowledge has to common perceptual experience. It may be, as an advocate of 'scientific philosophy' in this sense has admitted, (obviously with metaphysics in mind), that:

> "Many a philosophical system is like the Bible, a masterpiece of poetry, abundant in pictures that stimulate our imagination, but devoid of the power of clarification which issues from scientific explanation." 11

A final common view of what it means to call philosophy 'scientific' is that philosophy is a subject which serves to throw light on what scientists do and achieve. The physicist can be reminded that there is a philosophical theory, for example, which warns that if an atom is never directly revealed in sense-experience, there are insufficient grounds for calling it an actual, rather than a hypothetical, entity. The practical electrician can be reminded that if he thinks of an electric current as an invisible stream he is using a metaphor, since the current is no more than a hypothesis useful for the ordering of certain phenomena. If philosophers wish to call their subject 'scientific' on these grounds, one can only remark that the use of the epithet suggests more. In any case, this sense of 'scientific' applies more appropriately to logic and methodology than to the metaphysics of the external world. No such metaphysics would help to show the scientist what he is doing, for it is not relevant to the observations or the formulae of physics, let alone of the other sciences.

There is a sense in which it probably would be true, but useless, to say that metaphysics is scientific. If by calling it this someone wished merely to point out that metaphysicians often appeal to facts, speak of 'hypotheses' or 'examinations of the world' or 'truth', there is no objection. Nevertheless, one of the main purposes of this thesis is to show that however metaphysicians may talk, their methods and their descriptions are as dissimilar as they could be from those of the natural sciences.

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11. Hans Reichenbach, The Rise of Scientific Philosophy, University of California: 1951. p. 9

One reason why the views of Locke, Berkeley, Alexander and Russell do not have the empirical or scientific characteristics they claim is that they seek a very general, comprehensive answer to the question: "What is the nature of the external world ?" As Mr. Murphy said in his review of Alexander's book:

> "Thought seeks identities, it works towards the elimination of the variable and contingent, it seeks an absolute." 12

In these metaphysical views it is assumed that the answer to the question "What is the nature of the material world" will be in terms of an ultimate, or ultimates, which cannot be further analysed. Once the ultimates are presented, we find in each case that other things which we might want to call ultimates are ruled out as they can be translated into those terms which the metaphysician says are the ultimates. Nothing but Space-Time can be ultimate in Alexander's system; we cannot show that something else is, since everything is Space-Time. Nothing but hard data can be ultimate in Russell's system; we cannot show that something else is, since anything we suggest can be translated into hard-data terms. But which are ultimate, hard data or Space-Time ? It is a distinctive feature of metaphysical thinking that we have no definite means of telling.

Nevertheless, philosophers continually imagine that they can tell which theory is right and which wrong, at least those philosophers with rival theories. Stout, for example, criticised Alexander on the grounds that he had produced a "penny-in-the-slot" theory of perception. Alexander, in other words, assumed that the physical conditions of perception merely put a penny in the slot to unveil the world, to remove the screen between us and it. Stout says of Alexander:

> "He asserts and I deny that sensa are identical with perceived features of physical existence". 13

He goes on to say that it is the "natural view suggested prima facie

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12. Arthur E. Murphy, "Alexander's Metaphysics of Space-Time", The Monist, Vol. XXXVII, 1927. p. 359

13. G.F. Stout, "Professor Alexander's Theory of Sense Perception", Mind, Vol. XXXI, 1922. p. 386

by the facts" to suppose that sensa have no existence apart from the percipient's organism:

> "But Mr. Alexander thinks that the facts can be otherwise construed, and he holds that they must be otherwise construed if we are to give any tenable account of our knowledge of the physical world." 14

Stout seemed to recognise that Alexander presents what we might call a 'must-be theory', one against which it is pointless to cite facts if we hope to refute him by doing so. All the same, Stout proceeds to disagree with Alexander by citing facts. This is a familiar pattern of metaphysical argument, which even psychologist-philosophers are prone to enter. The facts are familiar to everyone, to Alexander as well as to Stout and to Russell. Yet they can have very different interpretations put upon them, and these interpretations are advanced as if they were quite certain truths.

It is now fashionable outside the realm of metaphysics, in which practically all philosophers avoid talking, to give a plain answer to "What is the nature of a physical thing?" We say: "Why, a physical thing is an apple, or a mountain, or even a soap bubble, or anything to which we give a material-object name. Everyone knows what a physical thing is, there is no problem." The metaphysician will naturally be dissatisfied with the Moore-like reply, and ask again, "But what is the nature of a physical thing ?" He will go on to say that he did not ask for a list of examples, he asked for an answer to the question about what makes any physical thing what it is. The next move by the fashionable anti-metaphysician is: "Since the obvious answer does not satisfy you, what sort of answer do you want ? What do you mean by 'nature of'? Do you want the answer to be in terms of chemical constitution, or in terms of physics, or in terms of mechanics, or in terms of what makes physical things different from non-physical things, i.e. in terms of a definition of 'material'?" The metaphysician has to explain: "No, I am asking a philosophical question. For example, would you say that a material thing is definable solely in terms of sense-data?" The fashionable reply to that is something like this: "It's confusing to say that it is, or is not.

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14. ibid., p. 387

If you say the apple is a series of sense-data it suggests that the apple is a strange kind of patchwork quilt, made of bits of experience instead of bits of cloth. This is not what an apple is. If, however, you say the apple is something besides a series of sense-data, it suggests that it is something queer, e.g. an unknown substance, which is equally wrong as the apple is what I see it to be. But both answers make a point. The point of saying that the fruit is a series of sense-data brings out the fact that the apple is what I see, feel, taste, and smell it to be. The point of saying that it is something more brings out the fact that the subject-term of statements about apples does not signify an infinite series of statements about the actual and possible appearances of apples."

This line of argument does show, I think, that metaphysicians find excuses for their views in commonsense and language. But it fails to explain, as metaphysical critics usually do, the a priori tenor of metaphysical conclusions about the nature of the world. The metaphysician is surely doing something more than pointing out obvious and pedestrian facts about the way we talk and think of apples and other material things, while ignoring other facts. He presents what he regards as an absolute truth about the ultimate nature of the material world. An absolute truth is a truth which is intended to be true independently of the facts of the moment, it is meant to be true of all possible experience. Wittgenstein recognised that this is the kind of answer metaphysicians seek when they ask about the nature of propositions. Clearly they ask the same type of question about the ultimate nature of the external world.

> "'The essence is hidden from us': this is the form our problem now assumes. We ask: 'What is language?', 'What is a proposition?' And the answer to these questions is to be given once for all; and independently of any future experience." 15

The metaphysician gives what he feels to be a final comprehensive answer, and not a series of reminders about our ordinary speech or thought. On the other hand, his answer is not one which either explains or fails to explain all the relevant facts, it is one which accommodates them all, and in this sense transcends them.

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15. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. Anscombe, Blackwell: 1953. p. 43 (para. 92)

The insistence by Alexander and Russell on the 'scientific' character of their methods and conclusions perhaps amounts to no more than an insistence on the truth (importance) of their conclusions. Their use of the word 'scientific' appears emotive; i.e. its use is not strictly correct, but helps to persuade them and us that metaphysical method is capable of producing true results which all rational beings will be bound to accept. Indeed, in some non-metaphysical contexts 'scientific' has come to mean 'true', 'objective', 'commands assent'. "He has a scientific outlook" is a description sometimes designed to evoke our praise for a person who is interested in uncovering truths of any type.

Alexander and Russell give irreconcilable answers to "What is the nature of a material thing?", both of which are comprehensive and accommodate all the relevant facts and common opinions by using them as grist to their own mills. Both these views also have commonsense excuses. Alexander seems to defend the commonsense belief that what is perceived is not always dependent on the percipient; but in doing so he transforms it into a metaphysical system far removed from common thought. Russell expands the necessary truth that what we know of the material world can be related only to sense-experience; but in doing so he transforms it into a metaphysical view which completely changes the ordinary assumption that the contents of the material world are different from series of private sense-data.

The views of Alexander and Russell, in short, seem to have those characteristics and use those methods which were evident from a study of the metaphysics of Locke and Berkeley. This statement will now be examined in detail.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE DISPUTE

A. Comparison of the views of Locke and Alexander
B. Comparison of the attacks by Berkeley and Russell
C. Typical contemporary forms of the dispute

"Their terminology has been abandoned - 'ideas' and 'impressions' have given way to 'sensa' 'sensibilia' 'sense-data' and other such technical terms - but the questions they asked have continued to be asked and even their answers (with more or less modification) adopted." 1

1. G.J. Warnock, Berkeley, Pelican Books: 1953. p. 236 (à propos of Locke and Berkeley)

I shall ask in this chapter whether the dispute between Locke and Berkeley concerning the ultimate nature of the material world is repeated in the opposing views of Alexander and Russell, and in a typical contemporary discussion. Perhaps, although the old disagreement is given a new dress, its shape and body remain the same.

My first contention is that Locke and Alexander make metaphysical claims about the nature of material substance which are more alike than they first appear, and that Berkeley and Russell attack these claims by using very similar arguments. My second contention is that philosophers today carry on what amounts to the Locke-Berkeley dispute in a linguistic idiom. If this is true it will be evident that a most remarkable feature of the dispute about the nature of material things is the persistence of the two kinds of view and the absence of any final decision that either or neither is "the correct one". This, it will be recalled, is the assumption I said I would examine further, since the suggestions about the Locke-Berkeley dispute in Chapter Four seemed to stand or fall by it.

A. Comparison of the views of Locke and Alexander

The obvious similarity is that Locke and Alexander both hold that material things, in the final analysis, are unrevealed by sense-evidence alone, are "something more ultimate" than their sensory qualities. The similarity between them extends further.

That their "something more ultimate" cannot be established by sense-evidence alone bothers neither Locke nor Alexander, who both believe that their ultimate substances can be known to exist by observation of what the senses do reveal followed by an inference. It may be objected that Alexander does not hold that an inference is involved in knowing about Space-Time, since he says that it can be intuited. The use of the word 'intuited' suggests that Space-Time is directly apprehended. But a study of what Alexander means by "the intuition of Space-Time" shows that in fact he asserts that we know of its existence in a manner similar to that in which Locke asserted that we know of the existence of Substance.

By the senses, said Alexander, we see and touch only limited spaces, and we experience only finite durations of time. Then we "discover" that spaces and times are continuous with one another, and "partly by imagination but largely by conceptions founded on experience" we imagine very large portions of space and time, until finally we intuit Space-Time itself.[2] Alexander uses the expression "percepts extended by thought",[3] and says, for example, "the primary qualities are apprehended by intuition but through sensation".[4] In other words, having an intuition involves the mental extension of percepts, and surely this, in plainer language, means simply that we make an inference from what we perceive.

We experience finite portions of space and time, we imagine enormous portions of them, and we infer that, since these finite portions which we imagine and experience are continuous, there must be something which is infinite, which is Space-Time itself. The inference made is a typical metaphysical one, from the known to the unknown, where the unknown inferred is unknowable in terms of sense-evidence. Yet, in spite of this, sense-evidence is cited to support the inference; the conception arrived at is founded on experience, or, as Alexander would say, basically it is "empirically given", it is inferred from what we perceive and imagine. Locke's inference that Substance must exist is similarly described. Studying sense-experience, Locke holds, will indicate that the pattern of our 'ideas' is quite inexplicable unless we imagine that they are upheld by Substance. Substance is an abstract idea, abstracted from experience, an extension of our percepts. The abstract idea of Substance like the intuition of Space-Time is an inference from experience to account for experience, and in each case experience is cited as evidence in favour of the concept.

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2. Alexander, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 41-42
3. ibid., p. 42
4. ibid., Vol. II, p. 160 (My italics)

It may be felt that this similarity is trivial. I hope to show that, although on the face of it one would think that "Substance exists" makes a very different claim from "Space-Time is the material of all that exists", the functions which Locke and Alexander allot to their concepts are so similar that it becomes difficult to know how to distinguish between Substance and Space-Time.

Locke urges that nothing much can be said about the nature of Substance, an "I know not what", while Alexander implies that the nature of Space-Time is fully known. However, if we consider Alexander's account of Space-Time and its functions appertaining to physical things, it turns out that it performs those very functions which Substance was designed to perform by the earlier metaphysician.

Four propositions central to both views can be written down in propositional function form, and "Substance" or "Space-Time" can be substituted indiscriminately for "X" without injustice to either author:

(1) X is the basic stuff from which material things are made, or their undifferentiated support, and it has causal properties.

(2) X's causal properties involve primary qualities.

(3) X unifies sensory qualities

(4) "Material objects are X" is the most basic assertion that can be made about them. It cannot be further analysed, since X is an ultimate.

I shall take these four propositional functions in turn and compare the values given to them by Locke and Alexander.

(1) Alexander holds, quite literally, that things are made of Space-Time, just as a coat is made from a roll of cloth.[5] Matter is "made out of the original stuff which is Space-Time".[6] By this he did not mean simply that things are always in some place and at some time; he meant that Space-Time is an ultimate stuff which causes material things, also, perhaps paradoxically, which <u>is</u> material things. Similarly, Locke meant quite literally that material things are made of Substance,

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5. <u>ibid.</u>, Vol. I, p. 341
6. <u>ibid.</u>, Vol. II, p. 50

and this is what led him, since at least half his thoughts were that Substance is not merely unknown but unknowable, to conclude that it would be lost labour to seek after a perfect science of natural bodies.[7] This point is closely connected with the claim both philosophers make that Substance somehow cements together sensory qualities, so that they form material things rather than haphazard collections of properties unattached to things, and, as it were, floating with no support or anchor. For Substance/Space-Time is the material from which those qualities are made.

Now Locke implied that material things are really Substance; e.g. secondary qualities are not included in their real natures and primary qualities are part of those real natures, i.e. part of Substance. Alexander on the other hand seems to suggest that material things are made of Space-Time plus both secondary and primary qualities, i.e. that they are really all these things. Yet when we recall that he also held that some qualities, e.g. colours, have a primary level and sometimes exist in dispositional form, as described in Chapter Five, it seems that he also held that qualities are sometimes secondary and have real primary counterparts which are motions in Space-Time. Besides, since on his view qualities as well as things are made of Space-Time, there is certainly no doubt that Alexander, speaking in ultimate metaphysical terms, would say: "Space-Time is all that material things are made of", just as Locke, speaking in those terms, would say: "Substance is all that material things are made of."

(2) Alexander claimed that primary movements inhering in Space-Time are correlated with sensory qualities[8], and further that the configuration of primary movements are, for example, the green of the apple in the dark.[9] Locke claimed that primary movements, and other

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7. See Locke, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 223 (Bk. IV, Ch. 3)
8. See Alexander, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 270
9. See ibid., p. 60 (Vol. II): "When not active as a sensum or a sense-datum, the sensible quality slips into a disposition which is on the primary level."

primary qualities, are correlated with simple ideas of sensation; he also claimed that the configuration of primary qualities are, for example, the green of the apple.[10]

Although both philosophers held that the ultimate imperceptible substance has causal properties which are responsible for our percepts, there are differences of detail in the views at this point. I believe these can be explained as differences of contemporary scientific theory which had profound influences on both philosophers. Alexander does not agree with Locke that all the primary qualities inhere in Substance (Space-Time) while secondary qualities do not.[11] He believes that motion inheres in Space-Time, and that motion alone plays the role of Locke's primary causal agents. He also believes that all qualities, including secondary ones, are independent of the percipient, e.g. a colour

> "though it does not exist as colour in the absence of light, exists as colour in the absence of the eye." 12

I am not sure that these differences are as great as they first appear. Alexander's emphasis on the dependence of colour on light, rather than on the eye or mind, is an echo of Locke's comment that porphyry has no colour in the dark, but a

> "configuration of particles .. as are apt .. by the rays of light rebounding .. to produce in us the idea of redness." 13

Locke's view that colour is not "really in the object", (except at a primary level), is at least akin to Alexander's view that a colour is "really in the object", (sometimes only at the primary level). The notable point is that both philosophers insist that sensory qualities

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10. i.e. Locke's doctrine that secondary qualities "rightly considered" are combinations of primary qualities inhering in Substance. See op. cit., Bk. II, Ch. 8
11. See Alexander, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 207
12. ibid., Vol. II, p. 58
13. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 176 (Bk. II, Ch. 8)

are basically imperceptible events in an ultimate substance. Both philosophers urge this point for it makes sense of postulating an ultimate stuff, it suggests that the durability of things is guaranteed in spite of the transience of sensory qualities. Alexander comments that Sir John Cutler's much darned stockings remain the same stockings since "the configuration of the motions within the substance" endure;[14] Locke also speaks, e.g. in the passage quoted above, of the "configuration of particles" as a guarantee of an object's endurance.

I commented that the fact that Locke states that all the primary qualities inhere in Substance, while Alexander reserves this activity for primary movements alone, is understandable in terms of the different scientific influences on the two philosophers. Locke was deeply impressed by the Newtonian view of Matter, and would naturally have particles in mind while formulating his metaphysical view of material substance. Particles suggest the properties of size, shape, solidity and number as well as motion. Although, as I tried to show, Locke transforms this notion taken from natural science into an unverifiable view, there is no doubt that the contemporary scientific influence determined the details of that view. When Alexander came to formulate his form of the substratum theory, however, the results of physics in this century suggested that Locke's other primary qualities were reducible to motions. For example, Alexander's inspiration from the science of his time makes it appropriate for him to wonder whether electricity is distinct from matter.[15] Velocity, inertia, and energy were the scientific notions which Alexander had in mind, while Locke drew his ideas from a billiard-ball conception of matter. Consequently it seems reasonable to suppose that the details of metaphysical difference between the philosophers' accounts of the primary cause of sensory qualities are incidental, differences in the letter rather than the spirit of their views. The fact that both

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14. See Alexander, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 273

15. See ibid., Vol. II, p. 54

Locke and Alexander, in spite of the progressive history of science that separates their periods, borrow notions from physics and transfom them into the metaphysical theory that the ultimate material of the external world has within it imperceptible causal properties, seems to me more striking than the dissimilarity between the philosophers' accounts of what those imperceptible primary events are.

(3) Alexander says:

> "Each quality inheres in the substance because it is included in the space which unifies the substance". 16

Locke says that simple ideas of sensation which we form into complex ideas of substances

> "have always the confused idea of something to which they belong, and in which they subsist." 17

The notion that sensory qualities are discrete items which are unified into material bodies by a sort of imperceptible cement is common to both views.

Locke says that the notion is a confused one, yet he persistently argues as if it were an undeniable one. Alexander does not say that his notion of the underlying element which synthesises secondary qualities is confused, yet at times some of Locke's emphasis on ignorance creeps into his discussion. For Alexander does sometimes suggest that "intuition" involves having confused notions, and this follows from his belief (discussed above) that an intuition is based on fallible sense-experience, although it is also extended beyond sense-experience. In his own words:

> "our senses only cheat us by their weakness and partiality of selection, but our intuitions cheat us because our senses are cheats." 18

This remark suggests that Alexander did not believe that the intuition of Space-Time is free from the confusion Locke attributed to the abstract idea of Substance. Nevertheless both had no hesitation

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16. ibid., Vol. I, p. 274
17. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 393 (Bk. II, Ch. 23)
18. Alexander, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 207-208

in urging that some imperceptible material does underly and produce sensory appearances. If more attention were paid to Alexander's work in contemporary philosophical discussion we should no doubt hear less of the opinion that no serious philosopher since Locke has entertained a thorough-going substratum view.

(4) "Material things are imperceptible substances", according to Locke, is the most basic assertion it is possible to make about them. No more final definition can be given. Locke imagined that we could never say more, for example, about the nature of gold; the nominal definition we can and do give is in terms of sense-evidence, its peculiar colour, weight, etc. But this depends on and is explicable by "that constitution of the parts of matter on which these qualities and their union depend." [19] Alexander makes similar statements, and, oddly enough, also uses gold as the example. A physical thing, on his view, has "defining motions" within the contour of Space-Time which is that thing.[20] Primary motions connected with yellow, and others connected with hardness, are grouped together within the contour according to "the laws of construction of gold".[21] While Alexander would not want to go as far as Locke by saying that the primary motions alone are the real gold, and the qualities which we observe provide only a nominal definition, there is a hint of this conclusion in some of his comments, for example when he speaks of Sir John Cutler's silk stockings.[22]

Substance and Space-Time, to summarise, are described as universal imperceptible and undifferentiated supports from which sensory qualities result. They have causal properties, unify sensory appearances, and provide the fundamental unanalysable character of the material world.

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19. Locke, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 61-62 (Bk. III, Ch. 6)
20. Alexander, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 270
21. ibid., p. 270
22. See ibid., Vol. I, p. 273, and discussion earlier in this chapter

It still seems that the conclusions about Substance and Space-Time must make conflicting claims. Substance, surely, is something different from Space-Time. "Substance" and "Spcae-Time" are not synonyms in ordinary language, (if we can suppose that they are ordinary terms at all). But as both terms are used in the two metaphysical views for notions which are given very much the same function, it is extraordinarily hard, while realising that the two views seem to make different claims, to assess just what that difference is.

All the primary qualities are said to inhere in Substance; only primary motions are described as inhering in Space-Time. Yet the issue is not so clearcut, for Space-Time is also said to have inhering in it all the qualities, none of which depend for their existence on perceiving organisms, all of which are said to be made of Space-Time. Locke would not admit that secondary qualities inhere in Substance; and yet again this is not entirely right, since he would admit that all secondary qualities are correlated with what does exist in Substance, and this is the view suggested by Alexander when he speaks of colours correlated with primary motions. The two views seem to make conflicting points, but further examination suggests that they make the same points in different but compatible ways. Alexander, for example, would disagree fervently with Locke's view that our 'ideas' exist only 'in our minds', that we can never know their real counterparts which exist in substance. Yet he would agree that they <u>have</u> primary counterparts e.g. imperceptible motions in Space-Time, and that the relation of these to sense-experience is a causal one. The picture is similar, sensory qualities with non-sensory causes in an ultimate substance. The difference is that while Locke denies reality to the curtain of sensa and affirms it of what lies hidden behind the curtain alone, Alexander wishes to affirm that both the curtain and what it conceals are real. The substratum in both these theories is said to involve hidden events which are correlated with sensa. The difference that in one the sensa are regarded as mind-dependent and not in the other does not enable us to say precisely what the difference is between Substance and Space-Time.

It must be evident at least that Locke and Alexander portray material reality in most similar terms. The dissimilarities are to be found in details which result from the different periods of scientific influence and in the decisions about the metaphysical status or degree of reality to be given to sensa. Neither sort of dissimilarity enables us to make a clear distinction between the view that material reality is ultimately Substance and the view that it is ultimately Space-Time. In Chapter Ten of this thesis I shall return to this question and ask whether a satisfactory answer can be given in terms of the hypothesis about the nature of the metaphysical theories which I shall then be in a better position to suggest.

B. Comparison of the attacks made by Berkeley and Russell

The metaphysical theory about the nature of the external world proposed by Locke and Alexander, (which I shall call the substratum theory)[23], is the one which both Berkeley and Russell attacked. This is obviously true of Berkeley, since he explicitly attacks Locke's doctrine. It seems equally, though perhaps less obviously, true of Russell as represented by his view that material things are logical constructions. Russell surely described the common opinion that things like apples and mountains are "fairly permanent" external objects as "a piece of audacious metaphysical theorising" because he saw that it harboured the substratum theory. Otherwise there would have been no object in doingsso. He wanted to barricade the well-worn path of philosophical reasoning from the premiss that we know a material thing only by its transient appearances to the conclusion that the material thing itself must be something more permanent underlying the sensory flux. It was surely not the unquestioning commonsense faith in single physical objects which aroused Russell's opposition so much as the temptation it offers to philosophers like Locke to indulge in substratum metaphysics. It is not the ordinary use of the word 'thing' for material objects which Russell attacks; it is the use of the phrase

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23. Meaning by this phrase simply that metaphysical theory which affirms sensory qualities, or appearances, are produced and unified by an imperceptible and undifferentiated support.

'thing-in-itself' by what he calls 'pre-historic metaphysicians' who culled their excuse from common language.[24] This is exactly what Berkeley attacks. He reminds us that he has no intention of disproving the existence of Matter in its ordinary sense, only the existence of what philosophers (especially Locke) call Matter.[25]

Berkeley and Russell use many similar arguments and produce a similar alternative theory to the substratum view they attack. In the first place, they both present the argument which contemporary philosophers sharing their outlook would describe as an exhibition of the bad logical grammar involved in the substratum theory. They make two main accusations under this heading: (1) that the substratum view involves a false notion of the logical grammar of general words, (2) that it involves a confusion between the grammar and the logical grammar of subject-predicate statements. I shall take these criticisms in turn and show how Berkeley and Russell both made them.

(1) Russell commented:

> "An important consequence of the theory of descriptions is that it is meaningless to say 'A exists' unless 'A' is (or stands for) a phrase of the form 'the so-and-so'" 26

Thus "Matter exists", "Space-Time exists", "Substance exists", etc., are either meaningless statements or else statements about particular things in disguise. The Theory of Descriptions rules out the possibility of saying that statements about abstract entities have meaning. General words do not have the same logical function as names, and general words like "substance" and "substratum" have no ostensive definitions - which is considered to be the test for deciding whether a word does function like a proper name. Berkeley also believed that statements like "There is an imperceptible substance" are strictly meaningless. The Theory of Descriptions and Berkeley's attack on the doctrine of abstract ideas both exhibit what Professor Luce has

24. Russell, "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics", loc. cit., p. 148 he speaks of the 'thing' being 'invented' "by the prehistoric metaphysicians to whom common sense is due."
25. See Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 55 (PRINCIPLES, para. 35): "The only thing whose existence we deny, is that which philosophers call matter or corporeal substance."
26. Russell, "Logical Atomism", loc. cit., p. 365

praised as "concrete thinking";[27] by which is meant the replacement of abstract notions by reference to basic data directly given in sense-experience. Russell, for example, urged:

> "wherever possible, substitute constructions out of known entities for inferences to unknown entities". 28

The 'logical atomist' argument against the substratum theory is that the general terms used in talking about substrata reflect the mistaken notion that they are names for abstract entities; whereas, it is insisted, general words only make sense in sentences which can be analysed by substituting words for concrete particulars. Berkeley holds that statements about redness are not statements about an abstract idea, or the common property of diverse instances, but a shorthand way of referring to instances of red. Statements about Substance are meaningless, for they do not refer to any concrete instances, but to a supposed abstract entity, which is nonsense. Similarly, Russell holds that "material thing", used in such a way that it is meant to refer to something which underlies the sensory appearances of a thing, does not refer to any ascertainable entity and is consequently meaningless. He reconstructs the meaning of "material thing" in accordance with the theory of descriptions, so that a material thing becomes a logical construction out of its appearances. And Berkeley reconstructs the meaning of the phrase so that a material thing becomes a group of sensory ideas. In each case the general term is replaced by a complex of particular ones. Insistence upon the principle that general words must not be used as if they were names for abstract entities seems, (if one might use such an expression), to cut away the ground from under the feet of substratum philosophers.

(2) Berkeley and Russell explain the mistake they believe substratum philosophers make, treating general terms as names of abstract entities, by charging them with another offence, that of

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27. Luce, op. cit., p. 63

28. Russell, "Logical Atomism", loc. cit., p. 363

misunderstanding the nature of subject-predicate statements. The grammatical structure of sentences for expressing propositions about the material world suggests that predicates are assigned to subjects which are not themselves predicates. This reasoning, it is alleged, leads metaphysicians to the erroneous supposition that a physical thing cannot be simply the sum of its appearances, and must be an imperceptible something which has those appearances. It seemed to Russell that once this "purely logical doctrine" is rejected, "the whole foundation for the metaphysics of all these philosophers is shattered." [29] Berkeley too was impressed by the importance of pointing out what he called in a notebook entry the "of and thing causes of mistake".[30]

Although these two criticisms of the substratum view appear to be based on facts of logical grammar, (their exponents exhibit such confidence in their infallibility), it must not be forgotten, as I have noted before and will develop later, that these "facts", if we call them such at all, are more like interpretations of language-functions than impartial descriptions comparable with the work of a philological grammarian. When Russell declares that the vocabulary and syntax of language make us think falsely that "triangularity" and "rationality" stand for "single universals"[31], and Berkeley declares that they lead us to the mistaken supposition that they stand for abstract ideas, the mistake alleged to have been made is quite unlike a normal linguistic mistake; e.g. quite unlike saying: "I went tomorrow". It is not in any simple sense a fact that "triangularity" does not stand for a "single universal" or an abstract entity, as it is a fact that in English "I went" does not refer to an action I will perform tomorrow. It is a philosophical theory that "triangularity" does, or does not, stand for an abstract entity, and ordinary usage is not

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29. Russell, "Logical Atomism", loc. cit., p. 360

30. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 18 (Philosophical Commentaries, entry 115): See also editor's note authorising this interpretation, p. 112. My italics.

31. Russell, "Logical Atomism", loc. cit., p. 368

designed to provide an answer to the question.

The method of reduction from the general to the particular leads to Russell's charge that the concept of a substratum is unnecessary, unwarrantable, and unhelpful. The notion of a physical thing can readily be reduced to a logical construction from sense-data. All that is said about material things can be said in terms of sense-data and the laws of physics.[32]

> "Our procedure here is precisely analogous to that which has swept away from the philosophy of mathematics the useless menagerie of metaphysical monsters with which it used to be infested." 33

Occam's Razor is applied, and, as Berkeley's modern disciple has exclaimed:

> "Given sense-data, what more in that line is required?"[34]

Berkeley urges that it is not merely unnecessary, but self-contradictory to speak of material things which are not equivalent to their sensory qualities. This is the main difference between the two attacks on the substratum view. Yet Berkeley also appeals to the uselessness of the notion of Substance, and so wields Occam's Razor in much the same way as Russell did later.[35] Berkeley argues, for example, that the supposition of Substance in no way helps to explain the occurrence and pattern of our 'ideas'.[36] But his principal contention is that the doctrine of Substance is self-contradictory:

> "You may say, for example, that twice two is equal to seven, so long as you declare you do not take the words of that proposition in their usual acceptation, but for marks of you know not what." 37

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32. Cf. Russell, Our Knowledge of the External World, p. 115: "Things are those series of aspects which obey the laws of physics"
33. Russell, "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics", loc. cit., p.148
34. Luce, op. cit., p. 159
35. Luce speaks of abstract ideas falling "beneath Berkeley's 'Razor'" ibid., p. 36
36. See Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 48-49 (PRINCIPLES, paras. 18-20)
37. ibid., p. 75. (PRINCIPLES, para. 79)

Berkeley reduces a material thing to a group of ideas in the mind of God. Russell reduces it to a series of aspects which obey the laws of physics. Did Berkeley mean by 'ideas' what Russell meant by 'aspects' or 'sense-data'? Since Russell did not hold esse est percipi, although he sometimes worried about whether it was true, it may be that by 'sense-data' or 'aspects' Russell meant sensory qualities, where Berkeley meant by 'ideas' actual sensations. It is clear however, that Berkeley did not mean by 'ideas' only what we normally mean by 'sensations' - e.g. pains, feelings of excitement, etc. Most of the examples of "ideas of sensation" which he gives are instances of colour, texture, shape, sounds, etc. , i.e. of sensory qualities.[38] Luce remarks that Berkeley never equates "There was a smell" with "There was a smelling"; by "ideas of smell" he always meant the objects smelled, and not the process of sensing them.[39] This interpretation of Berkeley's meaning suggests that, in spite of the contrary indication in the use of the phrase 'in the mind', he meant by 'ideas' sense-data, and not sensations or the acts of sensing. This is plausible in view of his theory that the ideas which constitute material things, as opposed to those which are illusory or imaginative, are objective in the sense that they do not depend for their existence on the presence of human percipients. Whatever this might mean, and fraught with difficulties as the notion of God's epistemological vigilance is, it at least shows that Berkeley must have intended by "group of ideas" sensory qualities, or aspects, as Russell did by "series of sense-data".

One reason why Locke and Alexander held a substratum view was, overtly, because it enabled them to explain how the transient appearances of a thing come to be unified into a single thing, and indeed to explain what is meant by "appearances of a thing". Neither

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38. See Warnock, op. cit., p. 147, for a discussion of what he feels is Berkeley's confusion about sensations and ideas. We do not "get colours" as we "get headaches". But this is no problem if, as it seems, Berkeley meant by "ideas" sense-data.

39. See Luce, op. cit., p. 65. Warnock's point seems to be countered by the fact that Berkeley did not hold that a smell is the same as a sensation of smell.

Berkeley nor Russell deny the need for some sort of explanation of the subject-attribute relationship. They deny only the need to postulate an insensible substance, and they offer alternative explanations. Any attempt to argue that Berkeley and Russell had very similar views on the nature of the external world is apt to meet its Waterloo in a consideration of their alternative explanations. In one case, the unity and durability of physical things , which are themsleves said to be no more than collections of sense-data, is explained by the constant attention of a divine mind. In the other the unity and durability is explained by the laws of physics and logic. Berkeley and Russell would certainly never wish to be saddled with each other's views on this point. But still, while the conceptions are very different, they are used for identical purposes. The reduction of material things to groups of their appearances, the rejection of any thought of an underlying substance, leaves phenomenalists with the need to replace the concept of substratum by some principle more acceptable to their outlooks and interests. Occam's Razor eliminates terms which are not strictly necessary for describing what is directly experienced. Some notion is then necessary to account for the fact that appearances are appearances of material things, and this has to be imported. It seems more a difference of personal interest or specific motive than one of philosophical spirit, which leads Berkeley to annex the notion of a cognitive creator, or "Author of Nature" to the unity of our ideas, while Russell conceives that this unity is supplied by the laws of physics and correlations of our sense-data.

The attacks of both these philosophers on the theories which make inferences from the known to the unknown involves the use of some emotive language. I pointed out that Berkeley speaks of the notion of insensible matter as "repugnant", "words without a meaning", "a downright contradiction", atheistic and sceptical, etc. Berkeley, not content with arguing that the substratum view is mistaken, urges that it is imbecile and unattractive. Russell, besides arguing that

it is mistaken, uses phrases to suggest that it is absurd - "audacious metaphysical theorising", "metaphysical monsters", "unwarrantable", "fiction". Part of the method of reducing the notion of a substratum to the notion of series of sensa in each case involves scorning the explanation which has been replaced.

Of course, although Berkeley and Russell both set out to undermine the plausibility of the substratum theory, and although they use similar techniques for doing this, I would not wish to claim that there are no notable differences at all between their views. Berkeley quite explicitly states that he has provided an *a priori* disproof of the rival theory, and his emphasis is on the contradictions he seeks in it. Russell states that he has provided a hypothesis which explains all the facts explained by the substratum theory without unwarrantable assumption., and his emphasis is on the verifiability of his theory. As I argued in Chapter Six, however, if Russell's theory of logical constructions is a 'hypothesis', the word cannot be taken literally, since his theory is as unverifiable as Berkeley's.

Russell's use of the word 'fiction' to describe the notion of an imperceptible object also suggests that his approach is similar to Berkeley's. If this notion is called a 'fiction', the claim could be that it is *a priori* false, or self-contradictory. For consider, it is a fiction that Alice fell down the rabbit-hole, or that dragons exist; this means that these claims cannot be confirmed or rejected by examining facts about living people or animals, since they are made in the particular universe of discourse appropriate to works of the imagination where it is inappropriate to make ordinary factual tests. But when Russell calls a statement about the substratum of a physical thing a fiction he does not imply that this sort of statement belongs to a particular universe of discourse where it is inappropriate to make factual tests, he surely means that the statement is about something which *cannot* exist, but is supposed to exist when, for example, philosophers misunderstand the nature of subject-predicate propositions. It would be absurd to say that people suppose dragons exist because they make mistakes about the function of statements about dragons. "It is a fiction that dragons breathe fire" does not deny that dragons breathe

fire, e.g. in pictures and books. "It is a fiction that sense-data are supported by a substratum" does deny that sense-data are supported by a substratum, and since it does not make this denial on grounds of fact - no sense-evidence can be called - it may be that this claim amounts to an assertion that it is a priori false to say that a substratum supports sense-data.

Whether or not this is so, it is clear that the difference between the views of Berkeley and Russell, that the first says the substratum theory is self-contradictory and the second says that it is a fiction, is not sharp.

The dispute between Locke and Berkeley, and the one implicit in the views of Alexander and Russell, now look as if they have the same issues at stake and produce much the same two conflicting answers about the nature of a material thing. I tried to indicate previously that it is an irresolvable dispute, and I have tried to indicate here that it is not a dispute which was shelved after the eighteenth century, but continues to engage the attention of philosophers in this century. It is not a curiosity in the museum of the history of philosophy, and it is not even confined to those philosophers who would like to hear themselves called "metaphysicians". This last point will be the particular concern of the next section.

C. A typical contemporary form of the dispute

One contemporary school of philosophers who adopted the linguistic analytic approach first turned the question about the ultimate nature of the material world into one about the philosophical utility of replacing statements about material things by statements about sense-data. These philosophers when they discussed phenomenalism concerned themselves with how useful it would be for philosophical purposes to adopt a certain terminology. They insisted that questions of fact were not the issue at all; the issue, they believed, was a choice, i.e. whether to adopt or reject a technical vocabulary. Professor Ayer, for example, stated that no dispute about facts is involved when philosophers disagree whether a penny, which (on different

occasions) appears round and elliptical, is really round and not really elliptical. In this case we would be:

> "not disputing about the validity of two conflicting sets of hypotheses, but about the choice of two different languages." 40

Nevertheless, Ayer held, the choice of language must be made.

> "If we accept the sense-datum terminology, then we must reject the terminology of naive realism; for the two are mutually incompatible". 41

On what grounds should we choose? The reason we are expected to have for choosing a certain technical language is that it seems more helpful for dealing with a particular philosophical problem than its alternatives. In this case, the sense-datum terminology is recommended on the grounds that it is more often appropriate for talking about our experience than any other vocabulary. It is always possible to translate a statement about a physical thing into a statement about sense-data; it is by no means always possible to translate a statement about sense-data into one about a physical object- e.g. it is not possible in the famous case of Macbeth's dagger. This fact about the comprehensive character of the sense-datum terminology leads phenomenalists to say that it has logical priority over any alternative terminology.[42]

This earlier disagreement among linguistic analysts, about whether the sense-datum or the physical-thing language is the most useful in giving philosophical descriptions of the material world, has more recently acquired an issue even less sharp. The question now tends to be, which analyses of statements about the material world offend least against the canons of Ordinary Language ? The assumption made by these contestants is that ordinary language, although they urge that it is not a fixed calculus, does provide a reliable and sufficiently stable set of criteria to serve as a source of tests for the truth of philosophical views and the value of philosophical terminologies.

40. A.J. Ayer, Foundations of Empirical Knowledge, Macmillan:1940. p. 17
41. ibid., p. 48
42. See, for example, A.J. Ayer, "The Terminology of Sense-Data", Mind, Vol. LIV, 1945, pp. 289-312

An illustration of this current mode is the reason given by Mr. Warnock for his declaration that Locke's theory of Substance is "a mistake".

> "His mistake, I think, can best be described by saying that he interprets as a baffling fact about the world what is really a quite straightforward fact about language." 43

Hence Locke's "mistake" is said to consist in an inference he makes from the linguistic fact that an analysis of a subject-predicate proposition about a material thing will reveal that "something" emerges as a substantive, to the conclusion that "there exists some common subject to be called substance".[44] Warnock continues: Locke,

> "instead of regarding the expression 'something' as a device for avoiding explicit reference to anything, construes it as if it does have some explicit reference. But then, naturally enough, he finds that he cannot say what it refers to." 45

This criticism of Locke implies that Locke's purpose in formulating his theory of substance was to describe the logical grammar, or the use in ordinary language, of the word "something", and that he fails to give a correct description, and is therefore holding a mistaken view. The assumption is that if a metaphysician interprets a simple fact about language as if it were a baffling fact about the world he is making a mistake; for his proper job is to stick to studies of words for physical objects and statements about them. If a metaphysician should think that he is not talking about language, but about the ultimate nature of the world, he is wrong; he is talking about language, even if he does not realise this.

My object is now to examine in more detail the two kinds of linguistic analysis of which I have given examples above, in an attempt to find out:

(1) whether the account of the traditional dispute between Locke and Berkeley which is implicit in them is correct

(2) whether the analyses given are, as they claim, "non-metaphysical studies" of ordinary language

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43. Warnock, op. cit., p. 107
44. ibid., p. 108
45. ibid., p. 109

(3) whether disputes about the physical-object language are notably different from the classical dispute about physical objects.

Since the provinces of the questions overlap, the answers to them will not be forced into separate sections. I shall consider the two main types of linguistic view, rather than the three questions, in turn.

(a) The Rival Terminologies View

Professor Ayer, in his early work at least, held that the question "What is the nature of a material thing?" is a demand for a definition, whether the questioner knows it or not. The propositions set forth in answer are "linguistic propositions", even though they may seem factual.[46] On this view when a philosopher asks about the nature of a material thing, he is really asking how 'material thing' should be defined; but a dictionary definition will never satisfy him, he is not asking how he should use the phrase in ordinary conversation. So philosophical theories about the nature of the material world are really rival terminologies advocated for the use of philosophers who talk about material things philosophically. They provide definitions, but not synonyms, which enable the philosopher to reveal philosophical implications of statements with the aid of a set of technical terms and rules. The terminology which most successfully performs this function will be the correct one. So, as Dr. Macdonald has argued, the linguistic theory

> "is on precisely the same logical level as a non-verbal traditional theory. It corrects the mistakes of its predecessors and claims their defeat and its own victory."[47]

I have argued that the traditional metaphysical theories about the nature of material things are unverifiable, irrefutable, and designed to accommodate all the facts, i.e. to deny none. Now the advocates

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46. See A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic, pp. 64-65

47. Margaret Macdonald, "Linguistic Philosophy and Perception", Philosophy, Vol. XXVIII, 1953. p. 313

of a technical language like the sense-datum terminology argue in its favour because they say it is useful. If we ask, "Useful for what?", the answer would probably be: "For doing philosophy". The analogy seems to be with a choice between English and Chinese on the grounds that one of these languages is a better medium than the other for expressing a certain thought or sentiment. It may well be that some ideas and feelings can be expressed more vividly or succinctly in Chinese, and others in English. In this case the choice of a language would be made on the grounds that the one selected is more suitable for the purpose in hand. The advocate of the sense-datum terminology suggests that we shall be able to express some philosophical points with greater clarity if we choose his language and not the physical-object language or some rival philosophical terminology, e.g. the causal language.

Consider the following type of description which is often given when philosophers wonder whether or not to choose the sense-datum terminology. If a person stares at an electric light bulb and then fixes his gaze on a blank wall he will see what the psychologists call an after-image. Now, the philosopher asks, does this person see something ? If we say he does, we can also say that he is seeing something on the wall which is not on the wall, or not there. Then is he imagining something ? Not in the sense in which I close my eyes and imagine the Albert Hall, I do not conjure up an after-image as I conjure up a memory image. Seeing an after-image red spot is not the same as seeing a red spot 'in my mind's eye'. The philosophical problem is further embellished by saying that if we decide that a man who has an after-image is not seeing anything, we create equal paradox.

I call this a philosophical problem to emphasise that it would not arise in ordinary contexts, nor indeed in any non-philosophical context. A plain man, or a psychologist, who asked questions about after-images would want to know, for example, what produces them, whether they vary in kind, how long they last, and not whether having an after-image is seeing something which is there.

These philosophical thoughts leads to the distinction which Professor Moore expressed by saying that there were at least two senses of "see". The paradox is resolved by saying that when a person sees an after-image and also when he sees a red spot painted on the wall he is "having a sense-datum"; but only in the second case does he see a physical object.

Now the philosopher advocating a sense-datum terminology will be quick to point out that his technical language scores a point in this example of philosophical description. The sense-datum terminology can be used to describe all perceptual situations whatever, all instances of "seeing", while the vocabulary of naive realism, the causal theory, or the physical-object language can be used only to describe the red spot painted on the wall, and never the red-spot after-image. But the philosopher who advocates another sort of language and rejects the terminology of sense-data can retort that the sense-datum way of talking fails precisely because it is applicable both to the description of after-images, dreams, hallucinations, and to the description of physical objects. Hence, he will say, it cannot be used to show the important difference between what a man sees in Moore's first sense and what he sees in his second sense. Translating all sentences about the external world into sense-datum terms makes it sound as if there is no difference in kind between images and light-bulbs. The person who wishes to use both languages, however, is readily accused of confusion, since he is at a loss to say which of the rival terminologies is the correct one for describing the situation.

The dispute is said to be about which language is the best one to use in the circumstances; i.e. which one will provide the least paradoxical answer to a philosophical question, or, as it is sometimes put, which one will provide a correct solution of a philosophical problem. The facts are agreed; how should they be described? It is often assumed that a very complicated and subtle technical language is required, and that plain speech is inadequate for the purposes.

Ordinarily, however, we should find no difficulty in saying that

the after-image is not really on the wall, although it looks as if it is next to the painting which hangs there. Consequently we cannot suppose that the rivalry here is between conflicting claims that seek to help in ordinary situations; they are strictly claims which seek to resolve philosophical impasses. Yet how are we to choose - which vocabulary does resolve the philosophical impasse about after-images and painted red spots ? We are meant to be able to decide on grounds of technical utility, but if we try to do so it turns out that the rival ways of speaking each make a philosophical point, and they each fail to make a different point.

If we talk about after-images and light-bulbs as "sense-data", we make the point that in each case we do see something; but we blur the difference between what we see. If we talk about light-bulbs and after-images as "physical things", we make the point that seeing either is different from seeing something in a dream or imagination; but again we blur the difference between what we see. If we talk about the after-image as a sense-datum and the light-bulb as a physical thing we do make the point that they are different kinds of thing; we point out that the after-image lacks many of the features of the light-bulb, it behaves erratically, is less permanent, and cannot be handled. Then we blur the similarity between the cases which the other ways of speaking emphasise, i.e. that both seeing a light-bulb and having an after-image is seeing something, and not imagining something.

The conclusion may be that a technical language which will blur no points about this situation has yet to be invented. It seems more probable, however, that no terminology can be designed to cater for all the things that philosophers wish to emphasise about perceptual experiences and comparisons. I suspect that when we accept one terminology and reject another we do so not because it "works better", but because when statements are translated in accordance with its rules we have a means of expressing a view about the nature of the external world which we wish to put forward, without seeming, in the current derogatory sense of that word, "metaphysical".

Surely when a modern phenomenalist tells us that his vocabulary

provides a better means of describing how philosophical problems can be resolved, he is telling us that phenomenalism is true. It is hard to find the point of translating physical-thing sentences into the sense-datum terminology unless the aim is to put forward a classical view that a physical thing is a series of sense-data, or to deny that there is a causal connection between sense-data and something else. The translation does not solve a problem, it makes a philosophical point. If we say that statements about material things can and should be reduced to statements about sense-data, although it is admitted that there is no non-philosophical reason why they should be, we are agreeing with Berkeley and Russell in a sophisticated and roundabout way that it is absurd to talk about a physical thing as if it were something distinct from its sensory aspects.

It is claimed that the ordinary English statement, "This cheese is stale", already describes all the facts that there are to describe in the sense-datum language. Our translation will add nothing to the information already conveyed by the ordinary language statement. The notion seems to be, however, that the technical translation is philosophically preferable to the ordinary language equivalent. It is "more analytic". It shows what is being asserted by someone who says "This cheese is stale". But people who have never heard of "sense-data" know perfectly well what they assert when they say this. They also know how to verify their statement. The sense-datum translation, which shows us, for example, that cheese is describable in terms of colour, texture, taste, smell, etc., merely makes explicit what is obvious and routine. Yet it is claimed that it shows something special and important about our daily comments on cheese.

Compare modern phenomenalism with classical phenomenalism; both seek to lay to rest the ghost of substratum. The traditionalist says: "There is no connection between sense-data and causal substance, since a material thing is defined in terms only of sense-data". The linguistic phenomenalist says: "There is no need to connect statements about sense-data with any assumption about a substance, since statements about material things are reducible to statements about sense-data."

Both attempt to banish the substratum view rather than to tell us something about how we use "This cheese is stale", and similar statements, which we do not already know.

Similarly, a philosopher who wishes to recommend a special causal language may have thoughts in common with Locke, and differ only by using the fashionable philosophical idiom. This philosopher may argue that the correct analysis of "This cheese is stale" is: "There is an X which has the properties of being cheese and being stale." But what, he will be asked, is 'X', what is stale but the cheese, and what is cheese but a series of sense-data ? He would have his retort: "X is the logical subject of the description. 'There is an X and X is A' is not reducible to 'There are A,B,C,D,...(sense-data) which are A', for this reduction produces a false statement, i.e. 'B,C,D,..', or yellow,round,redskinned .. are not stale. It is the cheese which is stale. The cheese itself is irreducible in the logical analysis, it can be replaced only by an 'X', which is a symbol for something which is ultimate and unanalysable."

In ordinary language, he will be reminded, (as if he had forgotten), 'cheese' is defined. It is defined as "curd of milk coagulated by rennet, separated from whey, and pressed into a hard mass"; or "a food with such and such an appearance". But these practical definitions are not the sort which interest either dualist or nominalist philosophers. When they ask for a definition of something, they do not expect to be told how to make it or recognise it. In their minds is a queer query, what function does any physical-object word whatever have, whether it be "cheese", "skyscraper", or "bubble". The modern substratum philosopher will conclude that "cheese" and any other word for a material object has a function such that an analysis of a statement describing its properties will reveal that it is replaceable only by an X or 'It'. He will urge that his analysis is correct, and he will mean that there are grounds for believing the substratum view and for rejecting phenomenalism.

No rule is laid down, in ordinary language or elsewhere, for choosing between rival analyses of material-object statements, any more

than there is a rule for choosing between rival metaphysical systems. Objections can be found to either, and excuses for both. Logical grammar, unlike ordinary grammar, provides no maxims for reference. Shall we say that "This cheese is stale" is best analysed: "I taste staleness which I associate with B,C,D,..(sense-data).." ? Or shall we say rather that it is analysable as: "There is an X which is cheese and has the property of staleness" ? The first analysis is impracticable (we can never complete the list of sense-data), and seems to lose sight of the grammatical subject of the sentence it analyses. The second analysis is practicable, but seems to make the grammatical subject of the original statement lose its reference. Since there are no criteria for deciding even what a correct philosophical analysis would be, we cannot tell which commits the lesser linguistic offence, or even that either is an offence against plain speech. To choose one of the analyses in preference to the other may then be determined by the chooser's sympathy with or antipathy to the philosophical outlook expressed by the analysis he chooses or rejects. The phenomenalist analysis is verificationist, it seeks to turn assertions about the material world into assertions about our experience of it alone. The other analysis rejects this outlook, and seeks to make those assertions signify items of sense-experience plus something else.

It is true in a sense that philosophical theories which express outlooks on the nature of the material world or our experience are rival terminologies. They do offer descriptions which make use of different idioms, and they emphasise different aspects of ordinary ways of talking. But their object does not appear to be simply the transmutations of syntax and semantics. For philosophical analysts, unlike the philologists whose studies they seem to want to emulate, do hold rival theories about the semantics and syntax of language, and it seems that they do this in order to urge rival philosophical views about the import of ordinary language grammar and word-usage.

The main argument against my description of philosophical analysis

will come from those who believe that the proper duty of the philosopher is to elucidate the meanings of those ordinary terms which, they think, produce philosophical muddles. They assume that the modern phenomenalist, and others, are attempting to describe ordinary language, and not the nature of the material world. Or, they will argue, at least this is what they ought to be doing. I believe neither that they are doing this, nor that they should be doing it. I shall give my reasons in the following section.

(b) Philosophical Theories and Ordinary Language

In Chapter Four of this thesis I pointed out how the belief that Locke and Berkeley were misguided reporters giving false accounts of ordinary language seems plainly false. Locke and Berkeley were quite prepared to accept an ordinary word used in a usual way provided that it was used with a special philosophical point in mind. Locke and Berkeley, I argued, neither misuse ordinary language, deliberately or unconsciously, nor do they misdescribe it by mistake or on purpose. They have, of course, definite feelings about how language should be used in philosophy, but they have no interest in advocating linguistic changes in ordinary situations. They do not advocate a way of speaking about the material world, but a way of thinking about it. Reasons for these statements are set out in the chapter referred to above. It is now necessary to say some more about why I believe current linguistic philosophy misses an important aspect of metaphysical contentions. I also wish to argue further that an analytic philosopher who accuses a traditional metaphysician of making mistakes as a result of confusion about ordinary usage takes sides in the traditional dispute.

First, it is necessary to distinguish two kinds of contemporary analytic philosophy which both urge the importance of ordinary language, but which exhibit quite different views about the nature of metaphysics. These were briefly mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis.

(1) There is the kind of analytic philosophy which does not

concentrate on the notion that there are mistakes about language in metaphysical reasoning which produces the bizarre conclusions. It speaks rather of "juggling with words",[48] "recombining known words in an unfamiliar way",[49] etc. It recognises that

> "poets do mould the use of language to their needs. And so philosophical scientists. Metaphysical philosophers do it too." [50]

This kind of analysis is aware that "It's not the stuff, it's the style that stupefies"[51], that metaphysicians are not unconsciously bad at logical grammar and unknowingly expert at false linguistic descriptions, but do knowingly indulge in a strange manner of speech. These philosophers do not hold that a philosophical theory can be refuted on the grounds that it misrepresents ordinary language. They see the point that a philosophical theory, even if it does misrepresent ordinary language, is intended to do so, and so cannot reasonably be accused of doing so. We do not condemn a blueprint on the grounds that it is not a photograph. Why then should we condemn a metaphysical theory on the grounds that it does not use or describe the sort of language spoken at teaparties and over the counter in shops and banks ?

(2) There is, however, the other kind of current linguistic philosophy, with the results of which I disagree. This kind is represented by Professor Ryle's theory of category-mistakes, by the articles in which Mr. Norman Malcolm attacks theories on the grounds that they violate ordinary language[52], and, most relevantly here, by Mr. Warnock's belief that Locke's theory, and certain parts of Berkeley's, are wrong and can be disproved because they misconstrue the ordinary

48. Morris Lazerowitz, "Substratum", loc. cit., p. 189
49. Margaret Macdonald, "The Philosopher's Use of Analogy", loc. cit., p. 82
50. John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis , p. 254
51. John Wisdom, "Philosophical Perplexity", Proceedings of the Aristdelian Society, Vol. XXXVII, 1936-37, p. 73
52. Cf. Norman Malcolm, "Moore and Ordinary Language", The Philosophy of G.E. Moore , Library of Living Philosophers Vol. 4, Northwestern University: 1942. p. 368:
"Moore's great historical rôle consists in the fact that he has been perhaps the first philosopher to sense that any philosophical statement which violates ordinary language is false.."

vocabulary of perception. These views, although they painstakingly reveal many interesting points about habitual English usage, imply that a metaphysical theory is false because it uses, or talks about, ordinary usage incorrectly - and this seems to be a gross misunderstanding of at least those views studied here.

Since I have no quarrel with (1), but I do with (2), it is the latter which will be examined in some detail here.

At the beginning of this section I discussed Mr. Warnock's statement that Locke makes a mistake when he interprets facts about the ordinary use of 'something' as if they were facts about the world. I said that there are no rules for the philosophical interpretation of linguistic facts, as there are for their grammatical interpretation. However, it seems that a rule is supposed to exist, in some esoteric Primer of Logical Grammar, to the effect that linguistic facts must not be imagined to be facts "about the world". We are not told whence this supposed rule is derived. Ordinary grammar does not incorporate the maxim: "Never treat facts about words as if they were facts about things", on the model of "Never split an infinitive", which is a stylistic recommendation, nor on the model of "Never use 'is' after 'I'", which is a grammatical rule, nor even on the model of "'I' before 'E' except after 'C'", which is a guide to spelling. Nevertheless, a fair trial will be given, and a further attempt made to see exactly what "linguistic mistakes" or "linguistic confusions" Locke and Berkeley may have perpetrated.

Warnock was undoubtedly asserting a linguistic fact when he said that 'something' is a device for avoiding explicit reference to anything. But this does not seem to show that Locke's view is a crude and simple-minded linguistic mistake. Presumably Locke's mistake is said to be that he construed 'something' as though it were the name of something. It is a fact that 'something' is a word used for referring to indeterminate things or events; it is also a fact that it is not a proper name, and not a pronoun but a noun. But whether

or not it is like a name is surely not a matter of linguistic fact at all, but one of philosophical interpretation. Consider the different ways in which we might interpret the actual function of the word 'something' in our language, if we are interested not merely in semantics and grammar but in the philosophical import of these considerations. Philosophers wishing to urge a substratum view can, without denying any truths about the way we ordinarily use the word 'something', say that since it is a word for avoiding explicit reference to any observable thing, then, when the word turns out to be irreducible as a final subject-term in the analysis of statements about physical things, it must make indirect reference to an unobservable substratum. On the other hand, philosophers denying the substratum view can say, also without denying any linguistic truths, that 'something' is not the sort of word which refers to any particular concrete thing, perceptible or imperceptible, directly or indirectly. I may indeed have a definite reference in mind when I use the word 'something'; e.g. when I say "I met Jones and he said something about his overdraft" - then I have in mind certain statements made by Jones, to which I refer as 'something'. But, it will be argued, although it is true in a sense that 'something' here refers to certain statements, it does not refer to them in the way in which my report of what those statements were would refer to them. Perhaps it is better to say that 'something' is a way of not referring to things. The dualist philosophers can reply that the sense in which 'something' does refer to something is more usual than the sense in which the word does not refer to anything. This in turn will be answered: and so on. The reason why one can guess with reasonable confidence that this dispute would be interminable is that it has ceased to take account of linguistic fact. Each side recognises how we use the word 'something'; but each side interprets the philosophical implications of how we use the word as they please. And ordinary language is not the sort of thing which can tell us how facts about itself ought to be interpreted.

Yet Warnock believes that Locke does deny a fact about the function of the word 'something'. He accuses Locke of thinking that it is

a word which has "explicit reference". To say that it is a word which does not have explicit reference is to stress that the whole point of using this word is to avoid mentioning any specific thing. Thus I avoid being precise on purpose when I say "Something tells me this is my unlucky day", (compare the relative precision of "My horoscope tells me this is my unlucky day"). If this is the fact about the use of the word 'something' which Warnock had in mind, then quite evidently Locke did not misunderstand the word. As it happens the lack of explicit reference for the word in ordinary language is the very feature which is important for Locke's own use of it to refer indirectly to an imperceptible substance. Substance is described as "something, I know not what". This is an impeccable English phrase. We might even argue it brings out a feature of the semantics of that word. It is quite correct to say "something, I know not what", but quite incorrect to say "an apple, I know not what", or "red, I know not what". Where then is Locke's mistake?

Warnock's other accusation is that Locke construes this fact about the word 'something' as though it were a fact about the world. Perhaps he does, but one still cannot see the point of calling it a mistake to do so. Even if Locke's doctrine of Substance were a heavily disguised treatise on the meaning of the word 'something' in ordinary language, (which is very far fetched), I can see nothing in what Locke says which denies any fact about the way in which we ordinarily use the word. On the contrary, Locke uses the word quite correctly, and does not offer any misdescription of it.

I do not deny that metaphysicians do in fact evolve grand theories about the nature of the material world partly from simple facts about language. For example, Warnock's account of the excuse for Locke's theory of Substance in the fact about the analysis of subject-predicate statements, which always seems to require the retention of a word like 'something', or 'it', is sound. Looking at this fact in a particular way, from a particular imaginative angle, results in the metaphysics of unknowable substance. This way of looking does involve imagining that the results of the semantic analysis of certain statements suggest, or even establish, certain metaphysical conclusions about what the

world is really like. But no error has been committed when this interpretation has been made. There are no grounds for saying that it is incorrect to make-believe that the pure logical subject of a proposition about a material thing is the name of an unknowable entity.

Two conditions which do not exist would have to exist before we were justified in saying that a metaphysician had made a linguistic error: (i) There would have to be definite rules of usage implicit in ordinary language for words like 'thing', 'quality', 'veridical perception', 'substance', 'sensation', 'sense-datum', 'substratum', etc. Half of these are technical words which do not occur in common discourse, and the rest have a multitude of uses in ordinary English. (ii) The metaphysician, in order to misuse or misdescribe these words, would have to be trying to use them in the ordinary way or trying to describe them.

If (i) were the case, then indeed we could point to a definite rule of speech which the metaphysician misconstrued, and if (ii) were the case, we would then be justified in saying that he had given a mistaken answer to a question he did in fact ask. But this is an ideal situation, which does not exist.

Let us examine these points in the light of a concrete example, again from Warnock's book.[53] Warnock argues that Berkeley claimed "It seems to me and to God and it would seem to anyone else that there is an orange on the sideboard" means the same as "There is an orange on the sideboard". If this claim were true, he continues, then it would be self-contradictory to assert the first proposition and deny the second. But in fact this is not self-contradictory. Therefore Berkeley made a mistake.

Now it is an empirical fact about the English usage of the word

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53. See Warnock, op. cit., pp. 181-182

"seem" that it is quite correct and usual to say "It seems as if there is an orange on the sideboard, but there isn't". Warnock draws attention to the fact that we say that X seems to be Y so that later we can either affirm or deny that it is Y. "There seems to be an orange" means either that we are not sure whether there is an orange, or that it merely looks as if there is, but there is not - e.g. it is a toy orange. Let us now consider what this lecture on ordinary usage has to do with the refutation of Berkeley's view.

Warnock claims that Berkeley asserted: "'There is an orange on the sideboard' means the same as 'It seems to me and to God and it would seem to anyone else that there is an orange on the sideboard'". But of course Berkeley would strongly have repudiated the suggestion that it could ever seem to God that there is an orange, since the 'ideas' which constitute the orange are 'in God's mind' -i.e. God directly apprehends the orange, and knows that it is there. Berkeley would have said: "An orange on the sideboard exists only in God's mind and in the minds of the finite spirits who perceive it." This is rather different, and cannot be translated accurately into a statement about what seems to be the case without missing the whole point of his metaphysics, which was designed, we must remember, to be a theological proof. It is perfectly clear to an impartial reader of Berkeley's works that he would not mean by "I have ideas which are the orange" that it seems to me as if there is an orange.

If Warnock did not seriously think that Berkeley would say this, at least he makes it clear that he thinks Berkeley ought to say it. Yet Berkeley himself most particularly considered that he ought not to say it. For if he did say that when a person has 'ideas' which constitute an orange it seems to that person as if there is an orange, Berkeley would be advancing that very same sceptical view which his metaphysical theory is specifically intended to banish. That is, if Berkeley had said what Warnock thinks he ought to have said, or did imply, Berkeley would have put forward the view that sense-evidence is not sufficient to establish that there is an orange on the sideboard. He knew what the ordinary word "seem" means, and because of this he avoids using it - it is not a word which would help to

provide the metaphysical description of this perceptual situation which he wants to give. Even so, Warnock accuses him of misapprehending the function of the word, and he does so by translating what Berkeley did say into a statement which Berkeley did not assert and which uses the word "seems" in the way he particularly avoided.

Berkeley did not hold that "It seems to me and to God and it would seem to anyone else that there is an orange on the sideboard" means the same as "There is an orange on the sideboard". He held that "God and finite spirits have ideas of colour and shape etc." means the same as "There is an orange on the sideboard". Can we still, given the correct translation of what Berkeley asserted, say that it is not self-contradictory to assert the first proposition and deny the second, and that consequently Berkeley was wrong because the two statements do not have the same meaning ? If we do say this, I believe we ignore a very important point, namely that Berkeley would never claim that these two statements mean the same within the framework of daily and non-philosophical discourse.

"There is an orange" means, in ordinary language, simply that there is a gold citrus fruit with a thick, rough skin, etc. It does not mean either something which is, or is not, perceived by God. Now Berkeley was well aware, as I tried to show in an earlier chapter, that his metaphysical theory resulted in some ways of speech which are not ordinary - e.g. in saying "We eat and drink ideas". But since his self-set task was not to describe common phraseology he merely comments that although we speak with the vulgar, we must think with the learned. If we say that ordinary assertions about oranges do not amount to assertions about God, and so Berkeley was wrong, we forget all his emphasis on the irrelevance of ordinary expressions to the truth of his metaphysics. He would agree that the vulgar do not ordinarily mean by "There's an orange" that they are receiving certain percepts from God. Nevertheless he will insist that the metaphysical truth of the matter is that this is what they must mean. In Berkeley's language - i.e. according to Berkeley's definitions - it is self-contradictory to assert that God has ideas of the orange and to deny that there is an orange, since he has made 'ideas in God's mind'

part of the meaning of 'orange' in his system. In his language assertions about oranges are assertions about God as well. To complain that this is not so in ordinary language, that in common parlance statements about oranges have nothing to do with statements about God, is simply to reiterate that Berkeley's language is not ordinary, but designed for a metaphysical purpose. Which everyone knows.

Compare a person who tries to 'refute' Shelley's Ode to a Skylark by saying that its second line is self-contradictory. "Bird thou never wert" implies that it is true both that X is a skylark, therefore a bird, and also that X is not a bird. This would be absurd for the same reason that it is absurd to attempt to 'refute' Berkeley on the grpunds that the two statements which he says mean the same do not mean the same in ordinary language. Neither Shelley nor Berkeley were concerned with the plain speech of 'the vulgar'.

This kind of attack fails, since the two conditions necessary for its success which I mentioned do not exist: ordinary language cannot legislate about the proper use of statements like "God has ideas" since the statement is outside its jurisdiction, and metaphysicians do not intend to chronicle ordinary uses of words, but have grander aims. Berkeley steps outside the province of ordinary language when he draws conclusions about an omniscient God who directly provides us with our sensory world. Earlier in this thesis I made the preliminary suggestion that the bizarre features of the views of Locke and Berkeley depend upon special interpretations of facts and propositions. They also have their own language rules, and to refute the results of employing them on the grounds that the theories do not always use plain speech would be very like refuting the rules of whist by citing those of chess - i.e. no refutation would be made.[54]

Although I claim that it is inappropriate to attempt refutations of metaphysical theories about the external world by reference to common speech, I do not, of course, wish to say that ordinary language is totally irrelevant in every respect. To compare the theories with ordinary language, and especially with the various common beliefs about material things inherent in that language, brings out their queerness,

54. An example used by T.D. Weldon, The Vocabulary of Politics, Pelican Books: 1953. p. 39

without condemning their eccentricity. More will be said in the next chapter about the relation between ordinary language and metaphysical views.

For purposes of further illustration, suppose that a linguistic analyst turns his attention to Alexander's view, in much the way that Warnock treats Locke's. It is a truism about language to say that whenever anyone talks about a material object it is always appropriate to ask: "Where is it?" or "How long has it existed?" or "When was it made, planted, or when did it appear?" In other words, the definition of 'material thing' would entail that a material thing exists in some place or other at some time or other. The analyst may complain that Alexander construes the fact that physical-object words are so used that it is always appropriate to ask of their referents "Where?" and "When?" as if it showed something about the constitution of material objects themselves. Alexander's mistake, the argument would continue, is to confuse "A material thing is something which exists spatially and temporally", or "Physical-object words are applicable to those things for which we can appropriately ask a date and a location", with the kind of statement which tells us about the constitution of material things, e.g. "Steel is made of iron and carbon". He interprets certain facts about the use of words for material objects in ordinary language as if they are facts about those material objects themselves.

This hypothetical case of a linguistic analytic attack on Alexander's view is only roughly sketched. But it serves to bring out in a different context the points I hope to make clear. Alexander was not particularly interested in what the plain man would have to say about space and time; the plain man, of course, would have nothing directly relevant to say about them. But suppose for the sake of argument that he did reason in this way: "Words for material things are always used in such a way that we can always ask of their referents "Where?" and "When?"; therefore material-thing words always refer to objects which consist of Space-Time". Even if Alexander did reason like this, we should have no grounds for saying that he was in error. He has interpreted

facts about the usage of material-thing words as facts about the nature of things, but as ordinary language provides no rule forbidding or discouraging Alexander's interpretation, as he has not made a 'mistake' which all competent speakers of English will recognise as one, it seems that we can condemn his reasoning only by rejecting it, and not by proving it invalid or incorrect.

Sometimes one can detect in an ordinary language advocate's criticism of a metaphysical view a subtle, cunning and disguised claim that the opposite traditional metaphysical view is the true one. For example, Professor Ryle by giving examples of common expressions in an attempt to show that it is a linguistic or logical confusion to speak of mind and body as separate entities, (in his book The Concept of Mind, for example), argues in favour of behaviourism and against the psychological substratum view. Yet he would no doubt sternly deny that he is entering the arena of metaphysical disputation. Mr. Warnock, who would make the same denial, attacks the substratum theory of material things with one of Berkeley's own arguments, that Locke was guilty of linguistic confusion and consequently wrong. Yet explicitly he is in favour of doing no more than undertaking

> "the proper investigation of the immensely complex vocabulary of perception in ordinary language" 55

But surely to attack a metaphysical view is not to investigate the ordinary vocabulary of perception.

It seems to me that the "ordinary language attack" on metaphysical views simply denies metaphysicians the right to be metaphysical, while there is reason to suspect that those who make it are themselves not above engaging in metaphysical dispute themselves. More clearly, the advocates of a sense-datum terminology sound very much as if they are recommending the classical theory of phenomenalism, and condemning the substratum view, in much the way in which Berkeley did. And the philosopher who promises an impartial study of the expressions of daily discourse, then attacks with some vehemence a metaphysical view about the nature of material existence, is surely producing an involved,

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55. Warnock, op. cit., p.p. 246-247

indirect and complicated contribution to the Locke-Berkeley dispute. He is not simply studying it or ordinary words. Unless he is aroused by the issues which give rise to the metaphysical dispute in the first place, it is hard to see the point of devoting ingenuity and trouble to showing that one side makes 'mistakes', when this accusation cannot be taken literally in so far as they are meant to be mistakes about ordinary language.

It seems that in the modern analytic approach to Locke and Berkeley we can detect that the dispute between them is still alive, and still irresolvable. There is but one important difference. While Locke and Berkeley appealed mostly to facts in order to give their views plausibility, their modern successors appeal chiefly to ordinary language expressions. Perhaps because the advance of science in the intervening period has made it seem a little indecent for philosophers whose subject has not progressed at all, but merely changed its idioms, to appeal openly to the facts of nature.

CHAPTER NINE

THE GENESIS OF THE DISPUTE

A. The Material for the Dispute

B. Metaphysical Interpretations and Reasons

"Philosophers reason for and against their doctrine and in doing so show us not new things but old things anew." 1

1. John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 181

I have argued in previous chapters that the dispute, both as it is waged by Berkeley against Locke and as it appears in the conflicting views of Alexander and Russell, has three characteristics which demand explanation from any meta-philosopher who seeks to reveal its mechanism or pattern. These are:

(1) Neither of the opponent views - that the material world ultimately consists of something imperceptible or that it ultimately consists of sense-data - can be conclusively confirmed or conclusively rejected on objective grounds; i.e. on grounds of material fact, ordinary language usage, or logic. To put it briefly, both views are logically fortified against refutation.

(2) As a result of this feature, the dispute is not merely unresolved, but irresolvable. Yet although it is irresolvable, the Locke-Berkeley disagreement persists, and, as I argued in the last chapter, can even be traced behind the heavy disguise of current views expressed in linguistic style.

(3) This study has also indicated that the theories put forward by metaphysicians to describe the material world are couched in a mixed logical style: their conclusions are formed in such a way that they rule out even the logical possibility of finding a refuting instance, while many of the arguments put forward for those conclusions appear to make appeal to empirical observation and suggest that by making such an appeal it would be possible to refute or to confirm the theories. No one type of argument is used in the metaphysical argumentation for the views. Some seem to draw upon scientific and psychological fact, some upon commonsense belief and ordinary ways of speech, some upon genuine necessary true propositions, some upon propositions which are made to function as if they were necessarily true, and some make frankly bizarre metaphysical claims.

I hope to account for the irresolvability and persistence of this dispute, for the irrefutability and mixed logical style of argument used to establish the rival conclusions which give rise to it. I hope to do this by expanding some of the inklings which have been gleaned into full explanations. This will involve further consideration of how metaphysical interpretations, reasons, attitudes, motives and what I have been calling 'pictures' might function together to produce a clash of opinion having the strange characteristics remarked above.

Any theory purporting to be about the nature of physical objects

must surely have a ground floor, however high its upper storeys may soar into the stratosphere of abstract speculation. In mapping the architecture of metaphysical theories I shall begin by asking about their foundations in ordinary beliefs, familiar facts, and common expressions about these beliefs and facts. It should then be easier to see how the mundane material of a metaphysical view comes to be moulded into something more extraordinary than plain fact; and how the uncontroversial elements of experience which we normally take for granted come to be used as evidence for two conflicting but equally irrefutable general conclusions about the nature of all that exists in the physical world.

In the final chapter I shall discuss the cause of the dispute in attitudes, motives, and 'pictures'. This chapter will be divided into a consideration of the material for the dispute, and some suggestions about its metaphysical treatment by special interpretations.

A. The Material for the Dispute

"A dispute about the ultimate nature of material things" is a phrase which sounds as if it must refer to a disagreement in which rival theories give literal descriptions which are either true or false accounts of material things. Many philosophers have held that it not only sounds like this, but that the dispute is in fact an empirical disagreement about the nature of the external world conducted by super-physicists. While I do not believe that the metaphysical theories studied in this thesis can be called, in any determinate sense, 'true' or 'false', it is clear that they have been, are, and will continue to be judged or termed wither right or wrong, correct or misguided, and, by many, true or false. One consideration will be to decide how the facts and common beliefs which seem relevant to the theories relate to those metaphysical conclusions which are sometimes said to be descriptions of them. This involves a study of what those facts and beliefs are.

Other philosophers, unable to discover what it is logically impossible they should discover, namely some sort of factual or

linguistic test which will show either that the theories deny or conform with the facts and common beliefs, have concluded that although metaphysical theories are not factually true or false, they are linguistically correct or incorrect; they do not give right or wrong descriptions of the material world but they do exhibit confusion or misunderstanding of the terms in which that world is normally described. Again, while I do not believe that these theories are either successful or unsuccessful attempts to show the workings of ordinary statements, or refutable by a painstaking semantic and syntactical study, it is nevertheless clear that they do involve some verbal contortions and linguistic tricks. Another consideration here, then, will be to decide what some of the linguistic material of the dispute is, what sort of statements and terms provide the cards with which metaphysicians perform their tricks.

We might say that the material for the dispute consists of three main types of data - empirical facts, (e.g. that we hear bugles and noises), common beliefs, (e.g. that the penny is round even when it looks elliptical), and ways of talking (e.g. we say "the snow is white", and "I shall believe it when I see it"). Yet as soon as such classification is attempted, it is apparent that we are dealing with a slippery question when we try to state what exactly the original data for a metaphysical theory are. For example, although it is a fact about experience that we hear bugles and noises, it might be retorted that it is better to call this a common belief, or a way of talking. To decide whether it is a fact, a belief, or a way of speech to say we hear bugles and noises is itself a metaphysical question. There are no ways of making sharp distinctions between facts, common beliefs and ways of speech until the metaphysician <u>makes</u> ways, and here the aim is to isolate what the metaphysician considers from what happens to it as a result of his consideration.

An attempt needs to be made to describe the original data for a metaphysical theory completely non-philosophically. That is, in order to see clearly what the non-metaphysical basis for a metaphysical dispute is, it is important to avoid importing technical classifications

which produce metaphysics and not plain description. If this attempt succeeds, it should make it evident that the data for a metaphysical theory are in themselves completely uncontroversial.

Since ordinarily we do not generalise about our experience in the philosophical manner, (e.g. we do not think about 'physical objects' but about pens, cars, mountains, etc.), the best way to bring out what the data from experience are before they are given a philosophical description is to list some concrete examples of the sort of points which seem to be considered relevant by those who seek to answer the comprehensive question about the ultimate nature of the material world.

(i) In the world there are many things, like buses, trees, rivers, snowstorms, sunshine, grass and saucepans

(ii) All these things have various shades of colour, shapes, sizes, smells, tastes, textures, odours, and many of them make noises

(iii) People have many experiences: besides seeing trees and hearing bugles and buses, they sometimes imagine that they do, or dream that they do, or occasionally seem to see and hear these things when the things are not there to be seen or heard

(iv) It would be odd of someone to say: "I heard, touched, smelled, and saw the bus, I was awake, I was not imagining that I did all this, I was in a normal state (not drunk or psychotic etc.), but no bus was there." If someone said this, we would think either that there must have been a bus there, or that he didn't really see, hear, touch or smell it, or that he was not really awake, or not really in a normal state. Alternatively we might dismiss him as a humourist.

(v) Similarly it would be odd of someone to say: "When that bus disappears round the corner, out of my sight and hearing, it will cease to exist". If it were clear that this person did not mean that the bus was a phantom, or that it was going to crash round the corner, we should dismiss him as eccentric or his remark as a joke.

"We", it must be remembered, know nothing of philosophy.

It is evident that (i) -(iii) state quite uncontroversial truths which no one bothers to state in non-philosophical contexts. They are in themselves boring matters, uninteresting statements about things which most people take for granted. Statements and facts about buses

or snowstorms and their characteristics might be provocative or interesting, but statements about <u>all</u> things, about fog as much as about saucepans, which claim no more than the truism that they exist, are hardly likely to arouse argument. A man who gave a lecture on all material objects whatever, who wanted to tell us as little about mountains and the moon as he did about brushes and prunes, would not hold his audience. That is, he would not be interesting <u>unless</u> he happened to have a scientific theory to explain or a metaphysical view to propound. For the point about the vacuously general truth that many things and many characteristics of things exist in the world is that it can arouse interest and controversy when it is given a certain interpretation - either scientific or metaphysical. Although no layman would deny that things as different as buses and cabbages exist, no layman would think anything of it. At the commonsense level this truth is trivial.

Point (iii) describes occurrences which are familiar to everyone. But ordinarily the fact that sometimes people see what is not there to see, usually when they are asleep, but in rarer cases when they are awake, and the fact that we can if we choose imagine the Albert Hall while we are looking at St. Paul's, do not seem in need of explanation. We just can; we just do; and that is the end of the matter. It is true that psychologists and physiologists have an interest in giving causal explanations of these phenomena, but even they have no interest in making inferences from them about the nature of the world, only about a limited aspect of the nature of people. Commonsense thinking takes hallucinations, illusions, dreams and memories far more for granted than many philosophical writers would imply. Some people are fascinated by dreams; but their fascination would not normally involve a question of whether they are <u>really</u> distinguishable from real life. Others are fascinated by the power of the imagination, for example by the fact that there are people who can look at a printed page and read it from a mental image they have formed while the book is closed. Yet normally no question about the eidetic image and the printed page would be raised, unless it was one seeking a causal explanation in terms of some scientific hypothesis. The point is that this kind of

phenomenon in any non-philosophical context is considered quite unsuggestive of theories about the material world.

(iv) and (v) made points about common beliefs or natural assumptions which are taken so much for granted by commonsense and by science that there is something bizarre in stating them at all. The statements about buses which I made to illustrate what seem to be the relevant common assumptions are statements which would probably never be made at all in an ordinary context, and if they were they would not be made seriously. The assumptions which they illustrate are not the kind which are consciously adopted. For example, the assumption that when the bus disappears out of sight and sound, and does not crash, and is not a phantom, it continues to exist, is very different from the assumption that its driver will continue driving it until he reaches the terminus. The first is something which we assume without question or thought; the second we might well question and ponder, especially during a period of industrial unrest. This is another way of saying that the common beliefs or assumptions that provide part of the data for a metaphysical dispute are not normally considered questionable, and indeed not normally considered at all. They are simply taken for granted, and anyone who in an ordinary context did not take them for granted would be considered most eccentric or witty. It is very important to remember this, for it contributes a point about the nature of a metaphysical dispute, as I shall endeavour to explain later on.

Before considering what some of the linguistic truths and scientific notions are that provide data for metaphysics, I wish to establish that the unexciting truisms discussed above are in fact data for the metaphysical dispute studied in this thesis. The simple points stated in (i) -(v) are difficult to separate from metaphysical interpretations placed upon them. This is because in non-metaphysical contexts they would hardly be dignified with the titles 'facts' or 'beliefs' at all. They are neglected commonplaces. To speak of them as facts and beliefs is already to lose some of our normal commonsensical indifference towards them; it makes them sound more important than they are in daily thought, speech and practice. I

shall try to show that the relation of a metaphysical conclusion to them is one which involves a loss of indifference and the introduction of various technical classifications and interpretations which change the commonplaces into controversial arguments.

Let us consider in turn the trivial truths listed under (i)-(v) above, and try to see how they are transformed in the metaphysical theories, which do take account of them, but in such a way that appeal to these original data does not serve to refute or confirm these theories. I shall partially restate the points as headings.

(i) and (ii) In the world there are buses, trees, etc., and all these things have various shades of colour, shapes, etc.

In the first place, metaphysicians draw attention to these two points by imposing technical headings on their items in such a way that (i) and (ii) are sharply distinguished from each other. As soon as this happens the truisms begin to look less commonplace. (i) becomes "Material Objects or Physical Things exist"; (ii) becomes, variously, "Simple ideas of sensation, sensory qualities, or sense-data, etc., exist".

Now although metaphysicians introduce these technical terms to describe commonplaces (i) and (ii), the result of the introduction is not just description, though of course neither is it misdescription. If we were to ask what material things are, we should be told that they are things like buses and trees. And yet by calling things like buses and trees "material objects" or "physical things" the haphazard and enormous class of objects gains a certain coherence and importance which it does not have while it is simply a list of all the things there are in the world, an indiscriminate collection of widely differing objects. The indefinitely long list of things like tables which always has to end with 'etc.' is now replaced by a phrase which seems to refer to a definite class of objects, membership of which is never in doubt. The differences between physical events like thunderclaps and fog and physical things like tables and soap-bubbles are blurred when we use one expression to refer to the lot - "Material Objects" or "Physical Things".

The metaphysical transformation of point (ii) is even greater. Without it I doubt that the question about the ontological status of colours and sizes etc. would ever arise. Normally there is no need to decide whether such items, like beauty, exist only in the mind of the beholder. But when all the qualities which things have are called "sensory qualities", or "simple ideas of sensation", or "sense-data",[2] we are immediately forced by the terminology, (which varies according to the interpretation the philosopher puts upon colours and shapes), to look at things like colour from a new angle, and to distinguish them more sharply than laymen do from material things: even if we finally choose to say that the two are identical.

The metaphysicians etch in a distinction which is very blurred in ordinary contexts. All four of them do this, Locke, Berkeley, Alexander and Russell. Compare the commonplace points with their metaphysical interpretations: instead of saying "There are buses of various sizes and colours", we now say in the more general but also less commonplace manner, "There are material objects and there are sense-data, or sensory qualities, according to the specific metaphysical interpretation given." Although the distinction between a thing and its characteristics, between a bus and its colour, does exist in ordinary thinking, it never becomes an issue about the nature of those things. For example, no layman would bother his head about whether the red and the height is part of, or different from, the 73 bus he catches to work. But he might, of course, think about the bus without thinking about its colour, or vice versa. The distinction made by the introduction of metaphysical terms like "material object" and "sensory quality", however, is not like this. It is more definite and more comprehensive. As soon as it has been made, we begin to think of the world as if it contains two different types of thing - objects and sensible appearances. As soon as we do this, we start to think metaphysically.[3]

2. I do not mean that these terms are synonymous. Only that they are all given application to what commonsense would call colours, etc.
3. Cf. J.F. Thomson, "Symposium -Reducibility", Proceddings of the Aristotelian Society, Suppl. Vol. XXVI, 1952. p. 103
"if philosophers had not wantonly introduced the category-word 'material object' would it still seem that something needed to be made clear..?"

The technical terms give a new look to the facts which suggested them. An unnaturally rigid distinction is made between what begins to sound like two different types of entity in the world - things and the characteristics of things. The imposed distinction raises a question which would not have seemed at all appropriate if it had not been made. As it is, it appears that an explanation is needed of the relation between things and the characteristics of things. "What is the relation of Material Things to Sensory Qualities, for example?" sounds much more reasonable, and also more important, than "What is the relation of the bus to its redness?"

The Locke-Berkeley dispute arises partly because different answers are given to this special question, which is the result of a special distinction. When Locke said that the relation between material objects and simple ideas of sensation was a causal one, he underlined the distinction by making buses and their colours sound even more like completely different sorts of thing, for he concludes that real buses are in themselves imperceptible and their perceptible qualities, e.g. the redness which we see, is the result of them. Berkeley reacted against this, and against the distinction which gives rise to Locke's conclusion. But he does recognise the distinction in the first place in order to deny that one of its headings has any items to list under it. Berkeley answers the question about the relation between things and <u>ideas</u> (or sensory qualities) by saying that there are no material things which are not identical with collections of <u>ideas</u>. Alexander, unlike Locke, did not underline the distinction in order to make out that material things are even more different than the classification suggests from their sensory attributes. He insisted, for example, that sensory qualities were not <u>ideas</u>, i.e. not dependent for their existence on the percipient, any more than material things are. He nevertheless makes use of the metaphysical distinction in order to say that the relation of a material object to its sensory qualities can be explained only in terms of a contour of Space-Time which unites them. Without the distinction, no such explanation would seem necessary. Russell too, like Berkeley, made a distinction between things and their aspects or appearances in order to deny that material objects were any more than

a series of sensory aspects. One reason why the dispute arises is that the metaphysical theories all share a presupposition, i.e. that this distinction between things and their appearances should be made, in view of certain ordinary facts like (i) and (ii), and then interpret the implications of that presupposition in conflicting ways.

Now whether "simple ideas of sensation", or, for that matter, sensory qualities or "sense-data", (which are not given precisely the same significance as each other, but which all seem to be phrases used to describe certain philosophical interpretations of the simple fact that there are colours which we see and sounds which we hear, etc), are or are not identical with material things is a question which is asked by those who have lost their indifference to the plain truths, that the world contains things like houses and trees, smells and colours. We might even say that the plain facts are irrelevant to the metaphysical interpretations; there is a temptation to say so since the facts cannot serve as tests for the truth-value of the metaphysical answers. Yet trees and houses <u>are</u> examples of material objects, and smells and colours <u>are</u> examples, interpreted in the appropriate way, of sensory qualities, sense-data, or simple ideas of sensation. There is a sense, surely, in which these things are very relevant to metaphysical conclusions about the relation of material things to sensory qualities, etc. I shall try to say to what I think that relevance amounts.

I said that one reason why the Locke-Berkeley dispute arises is that metaphysicians play a trick with the uncontroversial and simple facts that the world contains things like trees and also like colours and noises. This trick consists of substituting "The world contains physical objects and also sense-data, or also sensory qualities" for the pointless list of examples of things and their characteristics. The introduction of impressive generic terms forces us to take a different attitude to the boring truisms. By doing all this, the trick imposes an artificial distinction between those truisms, and succeeds in raising a very odd question, now familiar to philosophers

but none the less odd for that, which seems both to refer back to the commonplace facts but also to refer to their transformation. Locke, Berkeley, Alexander and Russell all accept a distinction, in some form or other, between material things and their sensory appearances. Berkeley and Russell accept it in order to argue that the two are identical. Locke and Alexander accept it in order to argue that material things are different from their appearances in such and such a way. Now on the surface it may look as if these arguments might be understood by looking at the data from which they first arose. It looks as if at least they could be translated back into ordinary contexts of daily life without losing their point or flavour.

Suppose then we say that Locke and Alexander are pointing out that we do distinguish buses from their colours, while Berkeley and Russell are pointing out that we do not. Might we then say that Locke and Alexander claim that buses are not coloured, while Berkeley and Russell claim that they are ? This clearly will not do, since in this very ordinary and normal sense Locke and Alexander would no more deny that buses have colours than Berkeley and Russell would waste their time saying that they do have colours. Yet, at the level of commonsense facts which some people think are being described by metaphysicians, what else could it mean to say that material things are, or are not, distinguishable from their sensory appearances ?

We might try stating that Locke and Alexander think that buses are things which cause the colour we see them to have, while Berkeley and Russell believe that the colour we see is part of the bus. But this just serves to bring out even more the eccentricity of the metaphysical views. For in ordinary situations there is no occasion to say either that buses cause us to see red or that the red, like the wheel, is part of the bus. The bus is coloured, or red, and there the matter ends as far as that commonsense which is so often evoked to add plausibility to strange conclusions is concerned. It is impossible to make sense of metaphysical interpretations if we look only at the commonplaces and not at the interpretations of them.

Now suppose on the other hand that we say the metaphysicians are not directly interested in things like buses and things like people's experience of their colours, or in those ordinary assumptions and actions which belong to the mundane world of catching buses to work, but in the relation between metaphysical entities like material objects and sense-data. But we have to remember that buses <u>are</u> material objects, and when we see them we <u>do</u> have sense-data. In this sense, metaphysicians must be interested in such matters. But I have tried to show that there is subtle dissimilarity between saying, for example, "That's a bus" and "That's a material object"; betweenssaying, "Look, it's red", and "I have a sense-datum of red" or, (on a different metaphysical interpretation), "Look, red the sensory quality". The technical terms make the facts they are used to describe more provoking than they normally are. Although it sounds eccentric to ask questions about the relation of the red I see to the bus itself, it sounds less so to ask about the relation of sense-data to material things. This is surely because the introduction of the technical classification seems to create a problem, where no problem ordinarily exists or arises. And just because the question about the relation of sensory characteristics, or however the red I see is to be interpreted, to material objects seems so out of place in commonsense thinking, a metaphysician has a free hand to solve 'the problem' he has created in his own way without fear of misrepresenting facts or commonsense belief.

At the risk of labouring the point, I shall try to put it another way, since it seems to me important.

Locke, in his metaphysics of the material world, denied that the colours we see are real. If it were true that a metaphysical account describes in a straightforward manner the commonplaces from which it arises, we would not be unjust to Locke to imagine him insulting a hostess at a garden party by telling her in all sincerity that her grass is not really green, although very plainly it looks green. But of course this story would be grossly unfair to Locke's theory. It ignores a distinction upon which he insists, between

perceived patches of colour, or sense-data, and things-in-themselves, or material objects. Locke would not deny that in a non-metaphysical sense the grass, which looks green, is green. It is only in a metaphysical sense that he denies it really has a colour. This sort of consideration makes one want to say again that the ordinary facts are irrelevant to metaphysical theories, because Locke cannot be refuted by the only sort of evidence that could refute him - evidence of the senses. Yet the statement that the grass is not really coloured, although it is a bizarre metaphysical statement which we cannot refute by studying grass, would not have the effect it does, would not arouse us, unless it looked as if it reported a strange discovery about grass or about colour.

To take a final example, Berkeley denied the existence of material things. If his metaphysics were simply a description of ordinary facts, this would mean that he denied fact (i) above, namely that there are in the world things like buses and trees. But of course he did not. He did not deny that there are things in the world, but that those things are distinguishable from our experience of their colours, shapes, sounds, etc.; he only denied that there afe material things in Locke's sense of 'material things', i.e. things-in-themselves which are imperceptible. Consider, for example, how Berkeley would not use the term 'material object' as he would use the term 'tree'; for the term 'material object' in his theory has no meaning, while the term 'tree' refers to a group of ideas. He did not say that trees do not exist; he said that material substances do not exist. Similarly Russell does not say that wallpaper does not exist; he says that the wallpaper is not a single material object, but a series of sensory aspects. These points help to bring out, I think, the relation of metaphysical reasoning to the commonplace facts. They are accommodated, never denied. Yet sometimes they seem to be undermined. This illusion is created by the use of technical terms and an artificial distinction which results from their use. The technical terms are terms for ordinary things and their ordinary characteristics, terms to cover grass and its length, oranges and their taste, and so on.

But they are also terms which make these things much more distinctive than they would normally be considered to be. Berkeley so uses his technical terms that we are led to wonder seriously what happens to the taste of the orange when we are not eating it, a puzzle which is entirely alien to any normal discussion of oranges. But we are led to wonder this if we are shown a way of thinking about the taste of oranges as we would think about a dream of oranges; if we start calling a taste an 'idea' and an orange a group of 'ideas'. This way of thinking, of course, is neither suggested nor denied to us by the facts about oranges and their flavours, which are simply that there are oranges which have various flavours. Nor is it suggested or denied to us by the facts about dreams, which are simply that we have dreams and sometimes they are of oranges. Yet, if we bring together by a special imaginative process of thought the orange and the dream, which would not be done by the plain man or the scientist, we can make out a case either for saying that it must be an imperceptible substance, or for saying that it must be apprehended by God, or logically constructed by us, or made of Space-Time.

Berkeley's answer, that God 'causes' the orange I eat, and I myself the one I dream I eat, is an interpretation <u>of an interpretation</u> of the commonplaces facts, and in no way a description of them. The facts are: I eat oranges and sometimes I dream I do. The first interpretation is: in both cases I 'have <u>ideas</u>'; this interpretation results from Berkeley's form of the distinction between things and their sensory appearances, denying that either are anything but <u>ideas</u>. The second interpretation is: therefore, the difference between the orange I eat and the one I dream I eat, since in both cases I have ideas, must be that the first is a group of ideas in the divine mind, while the second is a group of ideas in my mind alone. Other metaphysicians, however, starting with the same facts and the same presupposition, find no difficulty in making quite different interpretations.

This is just one way in which the material for metaphysics becomes so transformed that commonsense barely recognises it.

(iii) Besides seeing trees and hearing bugles, people imagine, dream or believe that they do when the things are not there

Normally we have no difficulty in distinguishing dreams and illusions from real things, and if we do on occasion have difficulty, this is not usually considered a good reason for setting up a list of criteria for future use. We have criteria, but they are not the sort which can be set up in a definite way. We know roughly how to distinguish dreams from waking life, and this is all that is needed for practical purposes.

But metaphysical thinking is a very different matter. The existence of two kinds of things, material things and sense-data for example, is suggested by the metaphysical classification. The question is then generated about how sense-data are related to material things when experience makes it true to say that sometimes what I experience with my senses is not an experience of a physical thing, but a dream, illusion, hallucination, etc.

Berkeley, as stated above, makes hay out of the necessity to explain veridical and illusory perception by using it as an excuse to give a metaphysical reason for the existence of a certain kind of God[1/2] Locke makes use of the need to conform with the facts about these phenomena by using them as a metaphysical reason for asserting the existence of an unknown causal substance. Russell tried to give an explanation of the difference in terms of logical construction. Alexander, anxious to deny the mind-dependence of any sense-data, even illusory ones (i.e. those which lead us to believe that there is a material object present when there is not), speaks of the mind's miscalculations in cases of illusory perception, (e.g. bent sticks in water), and of the reality of the images in dreams or memories. The last are said to be distinguishable from material objects since they are not united in the same way in Space-Time.

The distinction between material things and sense-data, together with the need to accommodate facts about veridical and illusory perception, are transformed by Locke into 'reasons' for asserting that material things are not identical with sense-data, and that their

relation is causal. Thus when I dream I bang my fist on a table, and have all the sense-data I would have if I behaved in this manner when I was awake, I am not banging one material thing on another, however much I may seem to be doing so at the time. For, Locke, says, my sense-data in the dream are not caused by material substance, the fist and the table I seem to sense are not real, but mental creations. When they are real they are still mental creations, but created by an external agency, unknown substance, and not by my mind.

Russell, like Berkeley, refuses to accommodate the facts of illusion in this way; he avoids the assumption of material substance by explaining them in terms of the tests we would normally make to see if we are awake, or sober , or not deluded by our senses, i.e. tests to establish whether the phenomena we sense are occuring in the ordered pattern we expect - whether both the candle flames we see can also be touched, whether the pink mouse also squeaks, etc. This type of explanation lends further credence to his view that the material world consists of logical constructions from sense-data; illusions are those sense-data which do not comply with the logical constructions and their relationship to each other.

In the case of these data for metaphysical views the conclusions drawn from them are not straight descriptions suggested by the facts alone. The conclusions use the facts to add plausibility to the theories, rather than report them. Locke and Alexander seize upon the need to recognise the distinction between veridical and illusory perception as an opportunity for urging that sense-experience is valid when it is caused not by our own mental processes, but by an imperceptible and ultimate substance outside us. Berkeley makes it an opportunity to urge the existence of a divine percipient, for example. None of the metaphysical conclusions which are made partly as a result of considering dreams, memories and hallucinations, are either directly suggested or plainly falsified by the facts about the psychological experience to which we are prone. But those facts considered together with the metaphysical classification and interpretation already made in each case, do without any doubt lend a certain plausibility to the conclusions

startlingly drawn from them.

(iv) <u>It would be odd of someone to say that when the bus disappears out of sight and hearing, etc., it ceases to exist</u>

I said before that this common assumption or belief is taken so much for granted that there is never occasion in a non-philosophical context to state it. When, during a philosophical controversy, a philosopher pronounces that the plain man believes material objects can, and do, frequently exist unperceived, we can hardly fail to agree with him. Yet our agreement seems somehow artificial. While it is obvious that a vast number of our ordinary statements, (like "I locked the passport in the safe"), do exhibit our constant assumption that things like passports or buses <u>do</u> sometimes exist unperceived and <u>can</u> always do so; while it is also obvious that a non-philosopher, once the question had been explained, would answer "Yes" to "Can material things exist when no one is perceiving them?"; there is nevertheless something most extraordinary about the question. From the commonplace point of view "Yes" is the right answer, but it is the right answer to an eccentric's question. Someone might ask, "Are there tigers in Africa?" or "Are eight sixes forty-nine?" and we answer "No". But in these cases we can go on to explain why we answer in the negative - because the only reports of tigers in Africa have been made by an unreliable source of information on the matter - e.g. Hollywood films - and because eight fives are forty so eight sixes cannot be forty-nine, etc. We refer to material evidence or to a multiplication system. The questions reveal ignorance, but not eccentricity. Now compare the question, "Does that bus cease to exist when it is locked in the garage for the night?"

Suppose the questioner makes it clear that he wants to know whether the bus ceases to exist in these conditions, and not, for example, whether it is real or a ghost vehicle, etc. We should, of course, say "No". Yet how are we to go on ? If the questioner says "Why not?", what possible explanation can we find in material evidence or well-ordered systems to establish that we were right to say "No" ? Only philosophical speculation can give rise to the

strange question; only philosophical theory can back up our answer. It is not enough (philosophically) to say that the bus will go on existing in the garage because people always believe that it does. While it is not a reply which satisfies chronic metaphysicians, it is the only thing there is to say at the commonsense level. At one time people always believed that the sun revolved around the earth, but they were wrong. Yet we cannot even use this sort of analogy here, for what would it be to discover that we have been wrong in assuming unthinkingly that buses go on existing when locked in their garages ? The question draws a blank.

I stress this point, because the practice of philosophical speculation makes it easy to forget how monstrous its questions sound in the realm of ordinary discourse. If they are asked, plain answers can be given without hesitation; yet the plain answers are not altogether plain once they are given to these questions, which force upon commonsense considerations which are entirely alien to it.

When (iv) stated above is said to exhibit a common belief or assumption, what is meant is that it exhibits a habit of thought which ordinarily raises no puzzles since we ask no questions about it. Some philosophers may feel inclined to say that it is a fact that buses can exist unperceived. This would be acceptable if they were not philosophers. As they are, the use of the word 'fact' by them arouses the suspicion that they are calling something a fact which by definition we can never observe, and that consequently they are grinding some metaphysical axe. Since I hope to make it clear that I have no metaphysical axe to grind, I shall say that the fact in question is that certain ways of thought and talking exhibit a common belief, usually an unconsciously held one, that things like buses can and do exist when nobody is perceiving them. This fact can be interpreted in a number of metaphysical ways, none of which are either true or false. It becomes transformed by the alchemy of the speculative argument applied to it.

It turns out that the common belief, e.g. that buses in their garages do not suffer a sort of extra-sensory annihilation, is given special treatment by the metaphysicians not unlike that accorded to

the fact that we sometimes dream.

The treatment does not involve destroying the common belief, but changing its point, making it have new repercussions. Locke, in the first place, had generated a puzzle about the relation of millions of discrete and disconnected "simple ideas of sensation" which he imagined sense-experience to be, and the ordered world of buses and trees, which, as a partially plain man, he knew must not be denied. One aspect of this problem which he created was that if the buses we see consist of simple ideas in our minds, it must follow that they cannot exist when the garage door is bolted upon them at night. Then they must cease to be simple ideas; yet simple ideas is all that they are. Locke chose to develop the dilemma into a theory which denies the second affirmation. Buses are more than simple ideas. All that ceases to exist in the garage is our direct knowledge of them, or our simple ideas. The bus itself does not cease to exist. It is an imperceptible causal substance. (I oversimplify one of Locke's involved argumentations on purpose, to try to show what he does to a common belief. I have oversimplified but not, I think, distorted his description of the continuity of material objects). The common belief, for example about buses in their garages, gives Locke no less than a <u>good</u> <u>excuse</u> for talking about imperceptible causal substance.

Now Locke himself, of course, does not regard his argument from commonsense assumption as an excuse, but as a reason for his conclusion. The transformation of excuse into reason is a topic for the next section of this chapter. Here I wish to emphasise that the ordinary habit of thought, which never gets stated or considered in non-philosophical contexts, is turned by Locke into a reason for believing in an eccentric view about things like buses. The fact that, if asked, the plain man would reply that a thing like a bus does not depend for its existence upon being seen, touched, etc., does not itself suggest the conclusion that a thing like a bus is essentially imperceptible, or for that matter that it is essentially a group of percepts. But it can be made to suggest such conclusions if we are forced to look at it with certain unusual problems in mind,

e.g. the problem about the relation of Material Objects to Simple Ideas of Sensation.

Consider further the following examples for the sake of comparison and contrast:

(a) "Do tigers exist in India?" - "Yes, but they might not have done, for example if India had a different climate, and they might not in the future, for example they might all be shot."

(b) "Do tigers exist unmolested by gunfire?" - "Some do, some don't."

(c) "Do squares without four sides exist?" - "No. Squares <u>are</u> four-sided".

"Do tigers exist unperceived?" - Yes. "Might they not, or might they not have done in the past?" - No, if tigers ever failed to exist unperceived, this would mean that they were not then tigers, but hallucinations , or something like that. The same applied to the suggestion that one day tigers might only exist when they are perceived. When we say "Yes" here, we cannot go on to explain why in the way in which we did after saying "Yes" to "Do tigers exist in India?" Nor can we reply as we reply to "Do tigers exist unmolested by gunfire?" Although it is commonsense to say that some tigers exist unperceived, in the least accessible parts of the forest, others "get perceived quite often", this misses the point of what <u>philosophers ask</u>. Philosophers, of course, do not want a factual reply about whether there are some tigers which no one ever sees or hears etc. They want to know whether there <u>can</u> be tigers like this, or whether when we say that there are, we are talking about a different kind of animal from the one which growls and waves its tail in the sight and sound of people.

Suppose then we say, "Yes, tigers exist unperceived; tigers <u>are</u> imperceptible", or "No, tigers cannot exist unperceived, tigers are groups of percepts". This reply is analogous to "No, squares without four sides don't exist, squares <u>are</u> four-sided." It is analogous, but with a difference; squares <u>are</u> four-sided, that is how they are defined, how everyone defines them, that is how they are correctly defined. But tigers are defined neither

as imperceptible nor as groups of percepts, but as striped and fierce feline quadrupeds, slightly smaller than lions, etc. This definition gives no backing to either metaphysical view.

Berkeley, like Locke, feels that the common belief that tigers do exist unperceived must be accommodated. It also seems to provide a useful excuse for the development of his theory. Casual readers of Berkeley would think, perhaps, that Berkeley undermined the common belief, for he <u>almost</u> denies what it asserts. The heart of his view is that no thing whatsoever <u>can</u> exist unperceived. This he insists upon. Then what about the ordinary belief which we all share that tigers in the depths of the forest exist when nobody is perceiving them ? This consideration seems to Berkeley to provide a <u>reason for</u> believing that there is a divine percipient. Nothing can exist unperceived; yet we believe things do exist unperceived by, as he puts it, finite sentient beings; and so they do, for these things are directly apprehended and created by God. Without destroying it, Berkeley gives our ordinary implicit assumption a strange twist. As commonsense itself does not suggest that tigers are directly apprehended by God, or, for that matter, that they are not, Berkeley is able to give this significance to the ordinary belief without misreporting it. Out of the commonplace material he creates an outrageously uncommonsensical view. He appears to deny, in the face of the plain man, that any thing can exist unperceived; but he grants the plain man his only point in saying that things do exist unperceived by finite beings. By granting commonsense its point, he transforms the plain man's belief into an unusual theological theory. That belief is not described, but changed - not recorded, but used for an unusual purpose, namely to prove the existence of a divine mind.

Russell, whose arguments are so often Berkleian although no religious motive can be attributed to him, plays a similar trick with our ordinary habit of thought. Material things on the one hand, sense-data on the other: the distinction is enforced in order to make sense of the denial that material things are anything other than sense-data. The plain man is now expected to object: "But if my books are

no more than series of sense-data, does this mean that they cease to exist when I cover them with a dustcloth ?" (No really plain man, we must bear in mind, would say this unless prompted; but he is often made a philosophical mouthpiece, so important do his beliefs seem to those plain men who are also philosophers.) The absurdity involved in thinking that books disappear from the world when they are hidden from sight and touch provides Russell with the chance to develop his view that a material thing is not a series of actual sense-data, but a series of both actual and potential sense-data, all of which items are so related that the series can be logically constructed. A material thing is a set of both perceived and unperceived perspectives. Hence the books behind the dustsheet continue to exist - in the form of series of unperceived perspectives or possible sense-data. This view is an extraordinary interpretation of the commonsense thought that books do not vanish from the world because they are unperceived. But it does affirm that thought, or at least avoids denying it.

We can observe the same kind of treatment of our common assumption in the work of Alexander. The orange, locked in a dark larder, surely not only still exists but is also, for example, still yellow, sweet, juicy, etc. Locke accounted for this usual belief by saying that the orange, and its secondary qualities, ultimately consist of imperceptible substance. Alexander presents an account which is a strange mixture of Locke's and Russell's arguments. The orange continues to exist in the dark because it is a portion of Space-Time, its secondary qualities continue to exist as potential qualities - the colour waits in abeyance for light to call it forth. The need to give an account of an ordinary belief again provides a metaphysician with a chance to transform it into a reason for a metaphysical claim, which he gives in preference to a straighforward description.

The remarkable conviction of these metaphysicians is that their speculative arguments serve to <u>explain</u> matters which the ordinary man assumes, but never analyses. The truth seems to be that their accounts transform these ordinary matters into theories which serve to influence our philosophical outlook, rather than to explain our ordinary outlook. For example, Berkeley's treatment of the common belief does not help us

to understand why we talk about areas of the Amazon in which no man has been known to set foot, it serves to force upon our attention the speculation that the whole world may be a direct result of divine mental activity. The basic material for a metaphysical theory is barely recognisable in its end product.

(v) It would be odd of someone to say that although he was awake, etc., and had ample sense-evidence that a bus was there, in fact no bus was there

It is perfectly true that we know a bus has come by using our five senses, or more usually by using three or four of them. If the possibility of delusion is ruled out, someone who had the usual amount of sense-evidence for saying "Here's the bus", yet felt that his claim must be false, would be suffering from what Russell called pathological doubt. Indeed, the reaction to someone like this would probably be to recommend a psychiatrist. "Here's the bus" is a statement which we can confirm only by using our eyes, ears, etc. If someone rejects the evidence resulting from this procedure, there is no other possible sort of evidence to offer. He would consequently be considered highly unreasonable.

Although we can say all this about the way in which we ordinarily know when a bus has come, without having to import philosophical distinction or speculation, the plain facts of the matter do not in themselves suggest the inferences drawn from them by, for example, Locke, Berkeley and Russell. How we usually directly find out about physical things does not suggest the possibility that those things are groups of "sensible things". For example, I find out that a bus is passing the window by looking at it and hearing it. If I want to discover whether a bus is passing this is the only direct way of finding out. Yet this in itself does not suggest anything about what sort of thing the bus is - whether it is a bundle of sights and sounds and smells or whether it is something which causes these. It only suggests that the bus is a visible, tangible, and audible thing, not, without metaphysical treatment, that it is, or is not, a collection of visibilities, tangibilities, and audibilities.

Yet Locke, Berkeley, and Russell conclude from a study of how we find out about material things that the material world itself is a collection of sensa, or ways of finding out. I discussed this point in Chapter Four, where I tried to show how artificial the sense-data picture of the material world is. I discover the bus has come by seeing it, etc. If someone said "It's come", and we said "What has ?", he may, instead of answering "The bus", point at the large red shape emitting petrol fumes and grinding noises. But from this procedure no non-philosopher would think of concluding anything about the nature of the bus, i.e. whether it is a group of sense-impressions. We always think of buses as things with certain characteristics, and the question of whether when we perceive those characteristics it is as though our mind contained them as a mirror contains its images never arises, nor does the question about the relation of the thing to its characteristics. From the commonsense point of view these considerations are highly artificial; for, as I tried to show earlier, the clearcut distinction which metaphysicians make between things and what is sensed, which helps to produce the sense-datum and the substratum picture of the world, is not usually made at all.

A cherry is something we find by seeing, tasting, or feeling. It has a certain characteristic look, taste and feel. It would be mad of someone eating a cherry, and knowing its name, to say that he was not sure whether he was eating a cherry. But this does not imply that the cherry is made of a look, a feel, and a taste, though neither does it imply the contrary. "What is a cherry ?" - the answer is "A small bright red stone-fruit, with such and such characteristics". Berkeley and Russell, and Locke in so far as he talks about nominal essences, reply "A cherry is a set of sensa -juiciness, redness, etc." Now both the commonsense and the metaphysical reply take account only of what we perceive in describing the cherry - but with an important difference. The first tells us how to recognise a cherry; the second gives us a highly imaginative picture of how we might bring ourselves to think about the cherry. In the second case it is quite impossible, even by the minutest examination, to tell whether the

way of thinking about a cherry recommended is true or false, correct or incorrect.

Sense-evidence, evidence of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, is the only kind of conclusive evidence for the confirmation or rejection of statements about material things. This is why we should look askance at a person who was given all this possible kind of evidence, but still denied the statement it supported. The simple truth that a bus is a visible, tangible, audible and odourous thing, which I can only perceive by seeing, touching, hearing and smelling, is turned, for example by Berkeley, into the metaphysical claim that it is a cluster of looks, feels, sounds, and smells, which exist only as a result of someone seeing, touching, smelling and hearing them. Commonsense, which provides the material for the development of this view, can provide no comments on its validity. For commonsense does not think of the constitution of things like buses in this way at all, and becomes irrelevant to the metaphysical quarrel.

Alexander partly shared the picture of the world as a kaleidescope of discrete sensory events, developed from contrasting things with how we recognise them. He stressed the incompatibility of this notion with the ordinary one that the material world contains single objects. Like Locke, he stressed the created dilemma in order to resolve it by the production of a strange view - that an imperceptible principle, Space-Time, unifies the discrete sensory qualities to present familiar objects. The intellectual construction of the bus from ways of recognising it - the bus as a set of looks, feels, etc.- suggests to Locke and Alexander the opposite sort of conclusion from that suggested by the same preliminary interpretation to Berkeley and Russell. It suggests to Locke and Alexander that the looks and feels which are said to constitute the bus must be caused by something which is not itself perceived by sense. Alexander, however, goes further than Locke and claims that the looks and feels themselves (as they look and feel to us) exist externally in the imperceptible causal agent, Space-Time. Once again, these claims do not result from

straight description of common belief and fact. They result from interpretative treatment, not from reporting, from speculation, and not from fact-finding.

The material for the metaphysical dispute does not consist wholly of plain fact and common belief, like examples (i) -(v) above. I shall now point out some of its other elements.

(vi) Data from scientific theory

Chapter Six was devoted to an attempt to show how Russell and Alexander, who claimed that their metaphysics was 'scientific', can only be said to have produced views at all comparable with the hypotheses of natural science in the sense that they borrow some scientific ideas. These seeds from science, however, as soon as they are transplanted into metaphysical soil, produce hothouse blooms quite different from the flowers they grow in their natural habitat. We can say that the notions which Locke incorporated into the theory of Substance also cease to be scientific in anything but name. Yet they lend to the metaphysical conclusions of all these philosophers some of the prestige which since Locke's time has been accorded to scientific endeavour with its spectacular practical results. Locke used the notions of particle physics, Alexander the notions of relativity theory, and Russell the method of Occam's Razor, to give the main examples, in order to produce an apparently empirical line of argumentation which nevertheless leads to a priori conclusions. All this has been discussed in previous chapters, and only a brief memorandum is intended here.

It seems that in addition to ordinary facts, beliefs and procedures, the basic material for a metaphysical theory includes scientific and mathematical notions. But like the uncontroversial facts and beliefs of the plain man, the more controversial notions of science, as soon as they become part of a metaphysical theory, take on significance and meaning which would be quite beside the point in their appropriate contexts.

(vii) Necessary propositions and linguistic data

The material from which a metaphysician spins his theory, as I have argued previously, includes some familiar necessarily true propositions. I have also argued that the conclusions of a metaphysical theory are couched in an *a priori* style. That is, they assert propositions which would not ordinarily be considered necessarily true, but which become necessarily true if we accept the definitions laid down by the system. It seems that Berkeley, at least, recognised this, when he noted:

> "Wherever my reader finds me talk very positively I desire he'd not take it ill. I see no reason why certainty should be confined to the Mathematicians."4

Necessary propositions, then, seem to enter into metaphysical dispute in two ways: they provide arguments, and they are used as models for metaphysical conclusions.

The immediate objection one anticipates to this is that it is not at all clear to philosophers what a necessary proposition is - whether, for example, it is always analytic, or sometimes *a priori* synthetic, whether it is certifiable by empirical fact or linguistic rule - and that consideration of these propositions is in itself richly productive of metaphysical dispute. The accusation may be made that in holding any theory about the nature of necessary propositions I am indulging in metaphysical quarrel while trying to explain it. The best way of countering this move is perhaps to state what it is I do assume about the nature of necessary propositions, which I believe coincides with what everyone would recognise as their unique characteristic. No analysis of this characteristic is offered here, since for my present purposes all I need to do is make clear that another kind of statement, besides simple statement of fact, is utilised in a metaphysical dispute.

I take it that no one would seriously deny that there is a difference

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4. Berkeley, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 58. (*Philosophical Commentaries*, entry no. 468)

between true statements the denial of which yield false statements, and true statements the denial of which yield self-contradictions or inconsistencies. It is surely evident to commonsense that when we say a square must have four sides we mean that we cannot, in any circumstances, truly say that it has three or five, whereas we can say that if a square is big, it happens as a matter of fact to be big, and might have been small without ceasing to be a square. Self-contradictory statements, it would be generally admitted outside the context of philosophy, cannot in any circumstances whatever be true. Now in order to make them express a truth we have to change the meaning of their terms. No shift in the facts will serve this purpose. But a shift in the facts might well make an empirical statement, previously false, true, without any change being made in the meaning of its terms. This is all that I assume or take for granted about necessary propositions.

Consider the following examples of statements:

(a) Everything is somewhere at some time
(b) You can't touch anything which is intangible
(c) You can't observe anything without observing it
(d) There cannot be an itch unless someone feels it, and there cannot be an idea unless someone has it.

These statements may be dull, but they would ordinarily be considered to be the kind which are undeniable, in the sense that to deny them is to utter self-contradictions, e.g. "I can touch the intangible". It would be senseless to say that I have a pen which is nowhere, will be nowhere, and has been nowhere; or that I have an itch which I never feel. It is inconceivable that I should be able to observe something without observing it. The statements (a) - (d) are irrefutable, unless we change the ordinary meanings of their main terms.

Consider now how these statements, with their genuine air of unalterable certainty, are used by the metaphysicians. For example, three metaphysical statements involved in the Locke-Berkeley dispute are:

(A) The existence of a sensory idea consists in someone's having it

(B) A material thing is no more than a group of ideas

(C) A material thing is an imperceptible substance

I hope I have shown that these statements, like genuine necessarily true statements, are irrefutable, i.e. they cannot be refuted by facts, only by insisting on a change in the meanings of their central terms. I now wish to see what the relation is between such metaphysical statements and ordinary necessary truths.

Locke and Berkeley both accepted (A) as a necessary truth. Yet from it Locke concluded (C) and Berkeley concluded (B). But (A), of course, is neither equivalent to nor deducible from statements which we should normally consider to be necessarily true, since the technical term 'idea' covers many more kinds of thing than the ordinary term 'idea'. So that a consequence of (A) is, for example, that it is self-contradictory to speak of a noise existing unperceived, which, of course, ordinarily it is not. "There cannot be an itch unless someone feels it and there cannot be an idea unless someone has it" provides a model for "There cannot be an <u>idea</u> (philosophical sense) unless someone has it", but it does not imply these metaphysical conclusions. Whereas from the metaphysical proposition (A) we can derive statements like "The existence of a smell consists in its being perceived", we cannot derive anything like this about our percepts from the ordinary truth that the existence of an idea - e.g. a thought - depends for its existence upon e.g. a thinker. Where an unfelt itch would normally be at least a suspect item of experience, an unseen colour is normally considered to be a reputable concept. Yet Locke and Berkeley class colours and shapes with itches and aches, using 'ideas' to describe a vast medley of qualities and sensations.

Yet (A) has <u>some relation</u> to ordinary truths like (d) . Locke and Berkeley trade upon the respectable credentials of (d) in order to invest the same certainty into (A). If we take "There cannot be an idea unless someone has it", and give a new and wider meaning to the word 'idea', we have manufactured a new <u>a priori</u> truth, and with it a new class of self-contradictions. If we makebelieve that colours and sounds, textures and smells, are like thoughts, opinions and beliefs, and also like aches and pains, we can use the technical term

'idea' for them all, and the transformed necessary truth now makes it self-contradictory to speak of unseen colours or unfelt textures, just as it is self-contradictory to speak of thoughts existing in the absence of thinkers or of unfelt pains. This is a typical use which metaphysicians make of necessary truths, changing the meanings of the terms which ordinarily serve to express them, or employing special technical terms, in order to give the ordinary necessarily true statements a wider set of implications without upsetting their a priori feature of irrefutability by fact.

Now consider how Locke and Berkeley came to their point of divergence. We have the necessarily true proposition, (which they have made necessarily true), (A) established in both their systems. From it Locke derives (C), while Berkeley derives (B) and denies (C) which he considers to be self-contradictory. Both may have had somewhere in their minds ordinary necessary truths like (b) or (c), you can't touch the intangible or you can't observe anything without seeing it. In themselves these truths convey nothing about the nature of the material world except the trivial points that if we say something is intangible we mean we can't touch it, and if we say we observe something, we must also mean we see it. Locke and Berkeley, however, produce imaginative interpretations of what such truths imply. The truth that we cannot touch the intangible (or see the invisible) seemed to Berkeley to be a reason for saying that as we do touch and see houses, they can never be intangible and invisible; Locke he believed, who held that we do touch and see houses but houses are intangible and invisible, uttered self-contradictions. But Locke, in his own terms, did not contradict himself. He held that we do not really touch or see houses, since they are really intangible and invisible. The metaphysical trick of distinguishing Appearance from Reality saves him from the self-contradiction of which Berkeley accused him. Now it is as though Locke and Berkeley, when they thought about the trivial tautologies of common language, saw in them different and equally eccentric significance. It is as if Locke said, for example, "We can't see the invisible (i.e. there is something invisible which we can't see)"; while Berkeley said, "We can't see the

invisible (i.e. there is nothing invisible since this could not be seen)". Locke's interest is in what cannot be seen, the hidden and unknowable, Berkeley's is in what can be seen, the apparent and familiar. Different interests naturally lead to different interpretations of a common truism.

Let us consider again Alexander's view that things must be made of Space-Time, or must be Space-Time. I suggested previously that the tone of authority in which he makes this pronouncement is partly derived from the undeniable truth that material things, pens or cars, must, if they exist, be somewhere now, or, if they have existed, have been somewhere in the past, etc. It is unthinkable that a real house should exist nowhere at no time. It is unthinkable because it is senseless. To rewrite Berkeley's comment, anyone who attends to the meaning of 'exists' when applied to material things will know that "A material thing exists" means "A material thing exists now in some place". Consequently Alexander, had he rested content with substituting the abstract nouns "Time" and "Space" for the use of different tenses and spatio-temporal adverbs, and said simply "Material things must be in Space and Time", would have said something obviously true but exceedingly dull. (Although to some extent the introduction of abstract nouns with capital letters alone promotes to a higher rank a proposition which could equally well be expressed without them). The dull truism itself, however, is kept in the background, as an implicit sponsor for the remarkable but somehow similar claim that material things <u>are</u> Space-Time.

"Material things must be in Space and Time" - "Undeniable". "Then they must be Space-Time" .. Compare: "Those buildings must be in London" - "Undeniable". "Then they must be London" .. The claims preceding the comment "Undeniable" in each case are truly undeniable unless we monkey with our ordinary language. The claims following the comment leave us with an uncomfortable feeling. They are not, strictly speaking, true. Things are not Space-Time any more than buildings <u>are</u> London. Yet if we are prepared to extend the province of a verbal rule - e.g. to make one set of things to which the word "London" is correctly applicable the <u>only</u> set of things for which the

word can be used - we can be persuaded that a given bizarre proposition is necessarily true, e.g. that certain buildings are London.

Alexander tries to do this with Space-Time. "X is a material thing means for one thing that x is spatially and temporally located" results in the irrefutability of "There cannot be a material things which is not temporally and spatially located". This becomes transformed, with the help of various arguments discussed previously, into "There cannot be a material thing which is not Space-Time". While the metaphysical claim is not made necessarily true by any rule of ordinary language, it does seem to borrow plausibility from the genuine necessary truth about material things in order to establish a new a priori connection between things and the necessary conditions for their existence - i.e. the connection of identity between things and Space-Time.

The metaphysicians make use of ordinary necessary truths, in themselves trivial, obvious, and quite unprovocative, as indirect certifiers for their own manufactured a priori claims. They remould statements which none of us would deny into statements which most of us would deny, yet cannot by denying refute, for they retain the irrefutability characteristic of the originals. Just as there is no way of refuting "You can't see what is hidden and therefore invisible" while there is a way of freeing ourselves from its logical necessity by changing the meaning of 'see' or 'the hidden invisible', so there is no way of showing that a material thing is not imperceptible while there is a way of freeing ourselves from the necessity to say it is. For example, we can decide to count what we see through a microscope but not with our naked eyes as an instance of "seeing what is hidden and invisible", so freeing ourselves from the first necessity. And we can refuse to accept Locke's verbal rules, for example the rule that 'thing' is to have two meanings - 'perceived thing' and 'real thing' - in order to free ourselves from the necessity to say that material things are imperceptible.

It is, of course, much easier to ignore Locke's special verbal rules than to ignore those of our ordinary language. This makes us prone to

accept "You can't see the invisible" more readily as a necessary truth than "Material things are imperceptible substances". But the point is that we need not accept either if we change the meanings of the terms, and we have to accept both if we accept both the verbal legislations which back the statements. The fact that most of us do not accept Locke's distinction between 'thing' and 'real thing' in his sense in no way shows that Locke's conclusion is not necessarily true if that distinction is accepted. We may prefer to say that 'group of ideas' counts as 'a thing-in-itself', as Berkeley did; or we may prefer to say that 'material thing' refers neither to a group of ideas nor to an imperceptible substance, but to something else, e.g. simply something like a tree or a mountain. It does not matter what we say, but it is important to realise that in offering alternatives to Locke's conclusion, or to any other metaphysician's conclusion, we are not thereby refuting it, for in its own terms it cannot be refuted, and the terms of its own system are the only relevant ones.

In the last chapter and throughout this thesis I have disagreed with the current philosophical view that a metaphysical theory either describes or misdescribes, uses or misuses ordinary expressions. It uses some ordinary expressions, of course, but we must remember that many of the central terms are technical. It never describes, misdescribes or misuses plain speech. The question arose, what then is the relation between a metaphysical contention and ordinary language? This has already been partly answered. I said that ordinary language cannot legislate about, for example, the proper meaning of a statement like "Ideas are in God's mind," or even about answers to questions like "What are material objects ?", asked, as Professor Wisdom would say, with a frown and not for information. We cannot refute metaphysical contentions by appealing to ordinary ways of talking. We cannot reasonably pretend that these metaphysicians had no idea of what ordinary speech was like. The relation of common expressions to metaphysical theory seemed to be one of assimilation by technical translation. I shall now develop this point.

A good example of explicit attention paid by metaphysicians to ordinary language was found in the Locke-Berkeley dispute about abstract

ideas, and fully discussed in Chapter Two. I tried to show that Berkeley only manages to make "Abstract ideas exist" into a self-contradictory claim by substituting his own definition of 'idea' for Locke's. Neither definition of 'idea', we must remember, is an ordinary language one. The issue concerns two alternative technical uses of a word. Now since the dispute is ostensibly about abstract ideas, which in turn is about the function of general words, it is only too easy for the linguistic analyst to leap to the conclusion that ordinary language or 'logical grammar' will decide the dispute. But I think I showed in Chapter Two that this is not the case. The way in which general words in fact function in ordinary speech fails to tell us whether general words stand directly or indirectly for particular things, whether abstract ideas in Locke's sense do or do not exist. The function of general words provides excuses for both views, or at least we can understand equally well, if we remain impartial, how our ordinary usage suggested Locke's view and also how it suggested Berkeley's. We can defend either view by considering semantics and syntax; but we cannot conclusively confirm or refute either.

The relation between metaphysical argumentation and ordinary expressions, like that between it and ordinary necessary truths, might be called one of interpretation, since "I see a tree", "That's a house" "I'm thinking of triangularity", are ordinary expressions which are not denied, misdescribed, or misused by Locke or Berkeley, but given unusual significance. They are accounted for by all the views. Yet, as soon as they become subjects of metaphysical treatment, they are expressible in technical terms - "I have ideas", "That's an imperceptible substance", "I have an abstract idea of triangle". This, however, does not mean that lovers of plain speech have reason to feel outraged. By all means go on talking about trees and houses in the way you do, say Locke and Berkeley, but I am giving you an account of what you really must mean when you do so. Perhaps we do not mean what we are told we really must mean. But then neither do we mean, by our dull and daily statements about the material world, anything which any metaphysical theory denies we mean. The metaphysical theories

take account of what we say, and if the result is transformation of it, nevertheless we are not told to say something different in our daily rounds of conversation. We are forced, perhaps, to look at what we do normally say from a fresh viewpoint - a metaphysical one - but not to stop saying it. The dispute about abstract ideas may make us wonder about the philosophical implications of our ordinary usage of general terms, but it will not prevent us from using those terms in the usual way, nor will it cause us to speak better or worse English.

Similarly, grammatical distinctions between nouns and adjectives seem to provide linguistic data for metaphysical theories, which do not deny the grammatical facts, but look at them in a certain way which leads to giving them implications they normally would not be considered to have. This point has been made by Professor Morris Lazerowitz who interprets the dispute about Substance partly in terms of different constructions which the phenomenalists and the substratum philosophers put upon the fact that our language contains both nouns and adjectives. It is as though the substratum philosophers argue:

> "'See, the difference between general nouns and adjectives is mainly a difference in the way they function syntactically in sentences. By comparison with their semantic similarity, this difference is trivial, but it hides their similarity'. And to correct this state of affairs and bring out what is hidden by the structure of subject-predicate language, general nouns are reduced to adjectival status. The syntactical function of nouns is turned over to a new symbol, and in this way the structure of subject-predicate sentences using general names as subjects is preserved and also the mystifying illusion of a deep theory about the structure of reality is created." 5

Professor Lazerowitz goes on to account for the phenomenalist analysis in this way:

> "Metaphysicians who find the substratum theory unacceptable also feel the importance of the semantic similarity which grammar tends to conceal, and are dissatisfied with the grammar that conceals it ... They see the possibility of assimilating adjectives to the class of substantive words.

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5. Morris Lazerowitz, "Substratum", loc. cit., p. 193

> Instead of reducing general names to complex adjectives they change adjectives into abstract nouns, 'red' into 'redness', 'round' into 'roundness', and so on, and dispense altogether with the subject-predicate form of sentence." 6

While I do not believe, any more than Lazerowitz probably does, that metaphysicians consciously set about changing nouns into adjectives or adjectives into nouns, simply for the sake of doing so, it does seem most plausible that one element in the enormously complex structure of a metaphysical theory involves certain interpretations of grammatical functions in ordinary speech. These interpretations would be made in order to lend further plausibility to the views which are propounded, in order to express certain attitudes or fulfil certain motives. For example, Locke explicitly appeals to the subject-predicate grammar of statements ascribing properties to things, as I have stated before, and by doing so believes that he has produced an argument for asserting the existence of 'some substratum'. It is only strictly speaking an argument for this conclusion if we share Locke's interpretation, or the metaphysical outlook in the service of which it is made.

Ordinary truths, expressions, facts, beliefs, together with some notions from science and mathematics, provide the basic material for the theories involved in the Locke-Berkeley dispute. In this section I have tried to show some of the threads in this material, but this study alone has made it evident that there are many of them, and to list them all here would not only be physically impossible, but tiresome for the reader. The main conclusion to be drawn is that the data are varied, complex, and considered non-philosophically most unprovocative. A metaphysical theory is provocative because it does not describe its data, but interprets them. Just as rough-hewn marble looks quite different once it is sculpted into a statue, so the data of metaphysics are barely recognisable when they are transformed into a theory. Two sculptors using the same marble, aiming to portray the same Greek hero, produce dissimilar and we might on occasion say incompatible effects. Similarly, two metaphysicians using the same data, aiming to portray the same material world, produce incompatible theories about it. The

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6. ibid., pp. 193-194

theories, nor more than the statues can be said to conflict with the material from which they are developed.

Having tried to describe the material, I shall now discuss in more detail how metaphysicians treat it.

B. Metaphysical Interpretations and Reasons

The treatment of the material by metaphysical argument and conclusion purporting to be about it is complex, but its common characteristic seems to be what I have been calling - for want of a better word - "interpretation". It is now necessary to show more clearly what this word is intended to signify.

"Interpretation" is used here in the sense in which an actor is said to interpret a part, or in which a critic is said to interpret a novel, or in which a novel is said to interpret a character, an epoch, or human relationships. I do not intend the word to be taken more literally, e.g. in the sense in which we are said to be interpreting when we translate sentences of one natural language into sentences of another; or in the sense in which causal judgments like "Those clouds mean rain" are sometimes called interpretations of the significance of phenomena. Like dramatic or literary interpretation, metaphysical interpretation provides a wide scope for individual expression, and is not bound, like translation or causal interpretation, by already set rules of procedure. The psycho-analytic interpretation of Shakespeare's presentation of Hamlet by ERnest Jones differs from that made by Bradley or Johnson. It is in sharp contrast to the more traditional interpretations, and we might say incompatible with some of them. The very same text gives rise to widely different descriptions of what its tragic hero is really like. Hamlet is called variously a man who could not make up his mind, a man with an Oedipus complex, a sensitive intellectual, an inhibited man of action, etc. The very same text continues to arouse critics in such a way that they go on giving different interpretations of it, and sometimes dispute about which interpretation is the most convincing.

Here, I think, we have a situation very similar to that which we notice in the Locke-Berkeley dispute. The same basic data give rise to different interpretations of it. These interpretations conflict. A dispute arises. A dispute can arise because the different interpretations are made of the same data, so the different theories are not merely unconnected pieces of imaginative fiction. Yet because they are different interpretations, the theories make conflicting claims. Ernest Jones makes a different interpretation of Hamlet's character from the traditional critics because his interests are different, his motive is different, and, in short, his attitude to the text is different. His aim is to interpret according to the thinking of Freud.

Some kinds of interpretation can appropriately be called true or false, correct or incorrect, probable or improbable. Translations are either correct or incorrect, causal judgments are either true or false, probable or improbable. The sort of interpretation which I believe to be characteristic of metaphysical method, however, is not the kind to which these epithets are correctly applicable. This might also be said of literary or artistic interpretation. Although people often do say "What X thinks about Jane Austen's novels is convincing, or plausible", for example, in these contexts the use of words like "convincing", "plausible" is not similar to the use of words like "true", etc. , and the words are used in the absence of objective criteria for their correct application.

If someone says that it is true (or correct) that Jane Austen's novels fail to be great because they portray mediocre people living uneventful lives, our hackles may rise and we may think "How false!" But we cannot point out anything about the novels which will conclusively refute the critic's view, although we could point out things which would serve to justify our own convictions that the critic was wrong. If two people dispute about the merit of a novel, there is no conclusive way of deciding the issue - for the same novel can be read from different imaginative viewpoints and there is no fixed and generally accepted criterion for dubbing one point of view correct and

the other incorrect. Words like 'true' used in these contexts appear to convey only that their users are agreeing with a certain interpretation of a certain kind of character, for example, or sympathising with a judgment which emphasises a personal reaction similar to the one they themselves experienced on reading the novel.

Similarly, metaphysical interpretations are such that an impartial examination of the data which they claim to explain will not suffice to convince us either that they are 'true' or 'false', 'correct' or 'incorrect'. Of course some interpretations of other metaphysical theories which are made by rival metaphysicians may, in a straightforward sense, be misinterpretations. Locke did not mean by an abstract idea what Berkeley said he meant. Yet even in this case, as I tried to show, Berkeley is not exactly making a mistake, advancing an incorrect description of Locke's doctrine, since his primary aim is not to describe Locke's view at all, but to demolish it and advance his own. In order to agree with the critic of Jane Austen's novels, or with Berkeley, we have to share an imaginative outlook on the data, it is not enough to make an unbiased or disinterested study of the novels or of Locke's Essay. Yet in order to check a causal interpretation - "Those clouds mean rain" - the epithets 'true' etc. are easily applied with general agreement once it is known whether in fact rain does follow the appearance of the clouds. It would be singularly inappropriate to say to the meteorologist, (unless, perhaps, one were a poet like Wordsworth), "I don't share your attitude, those clouds signify something different to me". The comparative irrelevance of attitude or bias to causal interpretation contrasts sharply with the dependence upon attitude of metaphysical interpretation.

A metaphysical interpretation is made in the service of a special imaginative attitude which the author has towards the data, of an imaginative design in terms of which he feels the material world ought to be described.

We might say, straining for precision, that "A metaphysically interprets P as P1" means that A concludes P1 from P in accordance with the presuppositions of metaphysical interpretation, where P

ordinarily implies neither P1 nor not-P1. If someone else metaphysically interprets P as P2, although P2 would then seem to imply Not-P1, it is not strictly true to say that P1 and P2 are conflicting interpretations, as for example P and not-P are conflicting interpretations, for in the metaphysical case it is not the interpretations which are incompatible - since neither is true or false - but the attitudes which promote them.

For example, partly from the fact that we have both veridical and illusory sense-experiences, (and partly from e.g. his definition of 'idea'), Berkeley concludes that God perceives the former but not the latter. We shall call this concluding P1 from P. Locke, on the other hand, concludes from P that an imperceptible substance is responsible for the former but not the latter. We shall call this concluding P2 from P. Now the assertion of P1 and P2 together does not result in a contradiction of the form P and not-P. There is nothing inherently self-contradictory about "God perceives my veridical ideas, and these are the ones caused by an imperceptible substance". But this conjunction can, of course, be made into a self-contradiction, for example by defining "veridical ideas" as those percepts which God shares and causes, and by making clear that "God" cannot refer to any material substance - e.g. by talking about "He". Since it is inappropriate to call either P1 or P2 true or false, we can never check either, before we can believe that they conflict with each other we should have to agree to play the Berkeleian or the Lockeian game - to accept certain significations which they attach to the words they use. And in order to do this we should have to share one or other attitude, and so be provoked into dispute.

A metaphysical theory of the material world is not, however, the direct result of one single and simple interpretation put upon the facts, beliefs, propositions and scientific notions which provide its material. It is obviously more complex than that. It involves a great many interpretations and reinterpretations, as I hope I have already indicated in this thesis. Here I hope only to point out how the hypothesis that the dispute is irresolvable and persistent because it

is a clash of interpretation and attitude rather than a factual disagreement about the actual nature of the material world seems to fit at least several important issues of the dispute.

First, it is clear that the quarrel between substratum philosophers and phenomenalists only arises, as I tried to show, when both sides agree to think in terms of a very general and technical classification of the data into Material Objects on the one hand and sensory qualities and sense-data on the other. To this extent the disputants share a presupposition. If we give "What is the nature of a material thing?" a purely commonsense form, e.g. "What is the nature of a mountain?", there is no provocation to either side, and a factual answer replaces metaphysical speculations. To start the dispute, it is necessary to rule out unadorned fact and commonsense and substitute that which has been given a new significance. We must, for example, ask the question "What is the nature of a material thing ?" at a very abstract level, it must be about any material thing whatever, and no specific worry should arise about whether steam and air, soap-bubbles and electric flashes, qualify as recipients for the title. We must also agree to ask what the relation is between a thing and its qualities, or between a thing and our experience of it, etc. We must avoid the more humdrum question often preferred by linguistic analysts, "What do we usually mean by 'material thing'?" This being so, it is not surprising that serious metaphysicians find bland and sensible replies and reassurances, e.g. some of Moore's statements, beside the point. It is important to bear this in mind to avoid a facile oversimplified account of metaphysical dispute and the relation to it of the cult of ordinary language.

Once the four metaphysicians, while apparently considering ordinary and unprovocative facts and beliefs about things and their colours, etc., transform those facts and beliefs by applying to them the Material Object / Sense-Datum dichotomy, we are forced to look at the data in a new light. We begin to think of the material scene as consisting of distinct species of thing - e.g. objects and sense-data. When we begin to think in this way, we are interpreting our experience and not describing it. We are interpreting a relation between it and the once familiar things.

We are classifying in a way which is not demanded for any practical purpose, and we are not describing a difference which is warranted by an actual sharp distinction between types of item in the material world. To say that there are material objects and also sense-data is not like saying that there are goats and also sheep, or mountains and also hills, or even like saying that there are flowers and also flower scents, although we have this sort of fact in the back of our minds when we make our interpretation about objects and percepts. As soon as we begin to think generally of things and percepts, and cease to think specifically of trees and smells, we begin to think in terms of interpretation and justification , and cease to think descriptively.

This shared interpretation provides opportunities for reinterpretations. The important differences between phenomenalists and substratum philosophers arise when different renderings are given of the relation between the two kinds of entity which occupy the material scene as a result of their technical distinction. The phenomenalists are anxious to dispel the impression created that things are sharply distinct from sensory qualities, or 'ideas', or 'sense-data', and argue that things are identical with groups of these. The substratum philosophers, on the other hand, re-emphasise the distinction which has been imposed, by arguing that things are quite distinct from sensory attributes, and that the relation between the two is one of cause and effect. The dissimilar reinterpretations are reinforced on both sides by a number of varied arguments which we might call reasons, remembering that it has been evident in this study that reasons in metaphysics are only likely to be considered grounds for believing the conclusions which they are meant to imply if we agree with the author's own interpretations of the data, and his redefinitions of the words he uses in order to make them.

Locke's reason for insisting that we must suppose that 'some substratum' accounts for the recurring patterns of our simple ideas of sensation was that unless we say this, we cannot explain how physical objects differ from dream objects, mental images, etc, do not depend for their existence on our perceiving organisms, and have a continuity and permanence although their characteristics change. The Heraclitean

stream of percepts seemed to misrepresent the reliably ordered material world we know. Sensory qualities must therefore inhere in an unknown substance. Locke's reasons are given for a belief which cannot with any accuracy be called a commonsense one. Yet the reasons themselves are commonsense reasons. In fact commonsense - belief in the difference between dreams and waking experience, etc. - is enlisted on the side of a fantastic conclusion, that things are really unknowable. The eccentric conclusion is given as a way of saving us from eccentricity, from a denial of the obvious differences between veridical and illusory experiences, for example. Yet while we would not deny the statements which are given as reasons, we normally would deny that they are reasons for holding the substratum theory. On the other hand, once we decide to urge the substratum theory, they become good reasons for doing so. Such considerations become good reasons if we have to reconcile, as Locke and Berkeley did as a result of their presuppositions, the sense-datum picture of the world with our set of commonsense assumptions; and if we wish to do it by expressing a certain imaginative outlook - e.g. a feeling that there is a mystery responsible for the familiar sensory scene, that there is more than meets the senses, and more even than science can ever show, about the ultimate nature of a table or a flower - or, alternatively, that there is nothing more. In such a frame of mind, and only then, would it be possible to subscribe without reservations to the opinion that Locke's reasons imply his conclusions, or that Berkeley's imply his.

It is surely because a philosopher puts a certain interpretation on his data that he seems to have a reason for drawing his conclusion. For example, as I tried to show in some detail before, it is because Berkeley gives a new signification to the necessarily true statement "Immediate sense-perception involves having 'ideas'", and to the fact that sense-evidence is the only kind of evidence which we can possibly have for asserting the existence of a material thing, that he believes he has reasons for concluding that a material thing is a group of 'ideas'. Philosophical reasoning involves a certain way of looking at facts and propositions. Sometimes the very same reasons are given in the course of the Locke-Berkeley dispute for opposite conclusions. In the imaginary

dialogue between Locke and Berkeley constructed in Chapter Four I tried to show, among other things, that the appeals to commonsense beliefs made by Locke in favour of asserting the existence of Substance are those made by Berkeley as arguments in favour of asserting the existence of an omnipercipient deity. I attempted to elaborate this point in the first section of this chapter. Appeal to our ordinary faith in the unity and continuity of physical things is also used by Alexander and Russell, by the former as an argument in favour of the unification of sensory qualities by Space-Time, by the latter as an argument in favour of the construction of sense-data into unities by logic. In view of this, it becomes evident that a given fact, proposition, or ordinary belief can be used in metaphysics as a reason for any conclusion about the nature of a material thing. This is because every metaphysician concerned with holding a theory about the nature of the material world wishes to contend with the same data and accommodate the same undeniable beliefs of the plain man. I have tried to show throughout this thesis that no fact, ordinary proposition, ordinary way of speaking, usual belief or common assumption is ever denied, although it becomes transformed for metaphysical purposes. It can only be transformed by being given new signification, and when this happens it becomes a reason for a metaphysical conclusion.

For example, Locke gave as a reason for his conclusion the fact that most of our propositions about material things are expressed by sentences which have subject-predicate form. In talking about things we usually do so by attributing qualities to subjects. Locke interpreted this fact, we might say, imaginatively, he suggested that when we say "The snow is white" for example we identify the white which we see as a property belonging to something which is not itself a property - and hence not itself a whiteness - to an undifferentiated subject. It is rather as if we meant "The whiteness belongs to something called snow", or "there is something called snow which has the colour white"; which indeed we may mean, but whether or not we do we should not normally wonder. Now the mere fact that sentences used to describe things often have a subject-predicate grammar does not itself imply either that when we use them we ascribe a sensory

quality to an unknown substance or that we do not. But it is easy to see how, extending the significance of grammatical form, we might come to see the fact in a new light, where it does seem to imply the metaphysical conclusion, and be a good reason for holding it. This surely is what Locke did.

Now Berkeley, and a number of modern philosophers, insist that the grammatical form of these sentences misled Locke. They themselves are misled if they think this seriously, for plainly Locke was not misled in using a fact about grammar, which fails to imply the contrary of the view just as it fails to imply that view itself, as a reason for his theory. Since, outside the sphere of philosophy, grammatical truths do not imply anything whatever about the nature of material things, or how statements about them should be 'logically analysed', there is ample room for different interpretations of their significance which an examination of sentence structure cannot possibly serve to check. This freedom of choice, unhampered by rules for interpretation, makes it possible to argue, as Berkeley and many others do, that the grammatical structure of certain sentences in no way shows that material things are unknown substances, but rather that they are groups of sense-data, since the subject of subject-predicate sentences is plainly a shorthand symbol for a group of characteristics by which we recognise the thing in question. The grammatical facts themselves, like other data for metaphysics, and as they do in the abstract ideas dispute, preserve neutrality, and support no philosophical theory any more than they confute it. They need to be interpreted as reasons for a metaphysical conclusion before we can see them as provoking facts, suggesting something about the ultimate nature of things.

I hope I have made as clear as the complexity of the material and the tentative nature of my suggestions permit the following points which are being claimed in this thesis:

The material for the dispute itself implies no metaphysical conclusions, but it is made to imply them when it is interpreted by metaphysicians. Their interpretations in the first instance involve the imposition of very general and very abstract classifications which

are not demanded by the plain facts themselves; i.e. they start from a comprehensive question about the facts. These are then reinterpreted by dualists and phenomenalists in the service of their attitudes towards the way in which they feel the material world ought to be described. Finally, individual metaphysicians make further reinterpretations which reveal their particular motives -e.g. Alexander substitutes the idea of Space-Time for the Lockeian idea of Substance. To take sides in the dispute it is necessary to share one or other general outlook, or this plus a specific motive for expressing it, and hence be prepared to make one or other set of interpretations and reinterpretations. For unless we do this, we can only reiterate that P implies P, and neither conclude P1 nor P2, and this would simply mean that we could not take the metaphysical dispute seriously, and prefer the dicta of commonsense to imaginative speculation.

The purpose of the next and final chapter will be to say something more about the function of attitudes and outlooks in metaphysical dispute, and to complete the presentation of the hypothesis designed to explain its more puzzling characteristics.

CHAPTER TEN

AN EXPLANATION OF METAPHYSICAL DISPUTATION

"Does not metaphysics sometimes
emerge as the attempt to convert
poetry into the logically
admissable ?" 1

1. D.M. MacKinnon, "Metaphysical and Religious Language", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Vol. LIV, 1953-1954. p. 117

(A) METAPHYSICAL MOTIVES AND ATTITUDES

The metaphysical dispute originates from two outlooks, and two different ways of multiplying the import of given facts and propositions. The question which these metaphysicians claim to answer , "What is the ultimate nature of a material thing ?", is asked in such a state of mind that plain commonsense is beside the point, and only commonsense which has been given a new significance can be considered relevant. As Professor Wisdom has said:

> "'What is water?' asked with a profound look and in the philosophic manner, has a confusing verbal similarity with 'What is water?' asked briskly and in the scientific manner. But these two requests differ in kind, not merely in degree." 2

I want now to put forward some suggestions which might serve to explain further what a 'philosophic manner' is, and why philosophers with apparent eccentricity prefer evaluation, justification and interpretation of facts and propositions to straightforward description of them.

So far the tentative hypothesis which I have offered as a possible explanation of the peculiar irresolvability and persistence of the Locke-Berkeley dispute leaves several important questions unanswered, the main one being why metaphysicians trouble to interpret facts and propositions which are themselves unexciting and unsuggestive of theories about ultimate natures. First, I want to repeat what I said in the Introduction, that it seems to me an answer to this question in terms of unconscious wishes or psychological needs is unhelpful. Such an answer fails to explain why some people fulfil their inner yearnings through the construction of a metaphysical theory rather than by some more usual and less didfficult method. Even less does such an answer explain why a metaphysician should choose the theory which he puts forward rather than some other. 3

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2. John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 13

3. See Introduction to this thesis, pp. 2-3

Secondly, it seems clear to me that an answer in terms of the metaphysician's alleged advocation of linguistic changes is inadequate. This has been fully discussed, e.g. in Chapter Eight. Metaphysicians certainly redefine and reinterpret the applicability of our ordinary words, and also introduce technical terms, but this is not to say that they advocate linguistic changes for the sake of doing so. They use language in a way which best serves their non-linguistic purposes, and continue to be as satisfied as anyone else with ordinary language outside the sphere of metaphysical discussion, and in so far as it suits their purposes in metaphysical discussion.

I stated that perhaps we shall arrive much nearer the truth about the nature of metaphysical dispute if we pay more attention than is now common to the statements made by the contestants themselves. This statement will now be reconsidered in an attempt to show what sort of things metaphysical motives and attitudes are.

There are, I believe, different general outlooks, or attitudes, which are expressed in metaphysical dispute. There are also different motives, which appear to be used as a sort of justification for the attitudes. Berkeley and Russell, I would say, share a general outlook for different reasons, or with different motives for expressing it. The general attitude of a metaphysician determines the type of theory he will propound, the philosophical school to which he will have allegiance, while his specific motive will determine the details of the theory peculiar to him. Let us see how this suggestion appertains to the theories which illustrate this thesis.

In this dispute, we can distinguish two general outlooks. One, shared by Locke and Alexander, wishes to see the world as something which is what it is irrespective of the presence of percipients. It lays emphasis, we might say, on the supposed need for a material stability which it cannot attribute to the shifting sensory scene. It is also what we might call a desire to synthesise rather than to analyse, to think in broad general terms of a single undifferentiated material reality which is responsible for the great variety of sense-experience. It is an intellectual search for a universal

characteristic. In ancient terms, it is a preference for a One rather than a Many. It is naturally given to the creation of inferences from the known to the unknown, i.e. from what is experienced to what is not experienced. The other attitude shared by Berkeley and Russell, and, I believe, by some contemporary philosophers, is primarily a belligerent revolt against the expressions of the first outlook. It insists upon seeing the material world in terms only of sense-experience. It emphasises the senory scene, and the value of sense-evidence. It is analytic rather than synthetic, in the sense that it shuns synoptic thinking in terms of the One, and favours concrete thinking in terms of the Many. It shuns the suggestion that there are things in the material world which are beyond the reach of sense-experience, and feels a lack of respectability in inferences made from sense-evidence to something for which it is logically impossible that there should ever be sense-evidence.

These outlooks are doubtless caused by a very complicated set of psychological factors which determine imaginative sympathy or antipathy to certain general points of view. It is not my business to enquire into this , since such an enquiry would not help to explain any further the metaphysical dispute which the attitudes generate. My contention that different outlooks give rise to different theories about the real nature of the material world depends upon the fact that people do see things in different lights, emphasise different thoughts and experiences, and this is the only psychological claim that need be made. It also seems to be a psychological claim which can easily be seen to be true. Since Western Philosophy first began in Ancient Greece, different philosophers have had natural or instinctive preferences for thinking about the material world as a unit or as a multiplicity. Since Parmenides and Heraclitus there have always been monists and pluralists. This repetition of different general outlooks is not confined to the history of metaphysical speculation, or of philosophy. Political and religious opinion exhibits personal preferences for one sort of general outlook rather than another. Tories and Radicals, Liberals and Fascists, Communists and Roman Catholics seem to have basic personal preferences for one kind of

political rule rather than another, or for one kind of assessment of the relation of the ruled to the rulers rather than another, or for one interpretation of the relative rights of the individual and society rather than another. They express these general outlooks by advancing political arguments, moral judgments, economic theories, etc., but in many cases it seems evident that the emotional impulse which a person has makes him a Conservative or a member of the Labour Party, rather than any logical weight of the justifications he proceeds to give for his outlook. A person who has no strong feelings about how society ought to be organised is inclined to be a person with no definite political allegiance.

Similarly in art and literature, taste, which may be argued for by appeal to aesthetic criteria and the latest canons of criticism, nevertheless seems to be determined by the sort of attitude which I am calling a personal preference which results in a general outlook of one sort rather than another. An example would be the dichotomy between Classicists and Romantics, or Representationalists and Impressionists. In all these examples, the theories which tend to result from the expression of such attitudes are, I think, very much like the "must-be" theories of metaphysics.

A metaphysical motive is determined usually by non-philosophical interests, where a metaphysical attitude is determined by imaginative and general emotional outlook. Locke, perhaps horrified by seventeenth-century religious bigotry, leading to persecutions and wars, by the faith he witnessed in the divine right of kings, was interested throughout his life in preaching toleration. It may be that his interest in the value of tolerance determined his motive for his metaphysics - to advocate intellectual humility, to prove that there is a limit to human thinking beyond which it cannot advance one jot. However this may be, we can undoubtedly say that he had an interest in replacing the dogmatic scholasticism or Aristotelianism rampant in the Oxford of his day with a cautious approach to knowledge. One way to advocate caution is to attempt a proof that there are matters into which the human mind cannot pry, since they lie forever beyond the scope of its faculties. Locke's scientific interests, it

seems, suggested rather the type of picture he would paint, and not his reason for painting it. He chose to express his outlook that the world is something basically undifferentiated and insensible, by setting out to prove that the human mind can never discover its true nature, hence that speculation about it should be curbed by a proper humility in the face of this cognitive inadequacy.

Alexander shared the feeling that the world is basically something undifferentiated and unrevealed by sense-experience. His motive for expressing this feeling is in a way similar to Locke's and in another way most dissimilar. Alexander wished to find the a priori feature which appertains to all things, a pervasive feature which is neither variable nor contingent. In other words, he wished to prove that the material world is what it is irrespective of percipients, to do away with what he called a "disproportionate respect for mind".[4] Perhaps he felt distaste for a certain arrogance of the Hegelian idealists corresponding to Locke's distaste for the arrogance of the sects of his time. Minds, Alexander set out to show, are but the most gifted members of a democracy of things.[5] In this way he too expresses the outlook which he shares with Locke by a design to curb respect for mind and encourage, we might say, respect for matter. But of course, where Locke set out to prove the inadequacies of thought, Alexander set out to prove that thought and sensing have no influence whatever on what is thought about and sensed. This difference may be due to the difference in the form of what Locke and Alexander were reacting against.

Locke and Alexander both thought that the true nature of the material world must be separable from our experience of it. They both felt that an imperceptible causal power produced the sensory scene. In Chapter Seven more precise similarities between the two theories were stated, and it seemed difficult to say just why "Material things are imperceptible substance" and "Material things are intuitable Space-Time" appear to make different claims.

4. See Alexander, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 237
5. ibid., Vol. I, p. 237

I suggested then that the difference might simply be one of different scientific period, explicable because Locke borrowed his term from Newtonian physics and Alexander borrowed his from Einsteinian theory. Now, I think, a better explanation of the difference can be given in terms of the hypothesis that metaphysicians justify their attitudes through specific motives, and while Locke and Alexander were both 'realists', they did not have the same motive for expressing the realistic outlook.

Let us consider how Locke and Alexander, sharing the same outlook, seeking a material stability in the external world which they felt unable to attribute to the sensory scene, had different reasons for expressing it. Locke's motive was to instil intellectual humility, to draw a limit to human thinking; for this reason he developed arguments for the existence of an imperceptible causal substance. Alexander's motive was to purge us of a disproportionate respect for mind, hence to find a non-mental pervasive invariable characteristic running through the material world; for this reason he developed arguments for the existence of an intuitable Space-Time from which all things are made. While Locke stresses, at the expense of sense-evidence, the limitations of the human mind, Alexander stresses, also at the expense of sense-evidence, the function of the imagination or 'intuition'. The outlooks of both philosophers demand that sense-experience should be deemed an inadequate form of knowledge of the material world, but one expresses this by seeking to prove that the material world is unknowable, and the other by seeking to prove that it is knowable only by intuition. Now in order to prove in metaphysical terms that the real nature of the material world is unknowable, and its apparent nature is produced by something unknowable, and exists "in the mind", the imagination is more attuned to think of the unknowable substratum in terms of the "billiard ball" theory of matter, of substance acting "briskly" upon us to produce our experience of it. But in order to prove that the world is imperceptible but intuitable, and its apparent nature is <u>part of</u> the basic imperceptible substratum, it is more appropriate to avoid the analogy with old scientific substance, and replace it by the analogy with new scientific "Space-Time"; which

concept, however little we may know of its scientific use, does not suggest a power acting briskly on our senses to produce "ideas". That is, Substance is the sort of abstraction we should easily imagine to be separable from experience, while Space-Time is not. And if we want to prove our permanent ignorance of substratum, we want to prove its complete separability from experience; while if we want to prove our intuition of it, we want to prove that in some sense at least it is part of experience. It is clear, I think, that Alexander does want to prove that Space-Time, the material from which things are made, is part of experience. Although he suggests by his view that sensory qualities have primary counterparts which are motions in Space-Time, that Space-Time is the cause of experience, he suggests even more strongly, e.g. by his view that sensory qualities are identical with their primary counterparts, (identical therefore with Space-Time), that where and when a thing is, or where and when we have an experience, is not distinct from what the thing or the experience is.

In this way, I think the hypothesis that Locke and Alexander had the same outlook, but different interests or motives in expressing it, does explain the strange similarity yet difference between their views. The curtain of sense-experience which, in Locke's version of the substratum picture, can never be drawn to reveal the nature of what lies behind it, is depicted, in Alexander's, as saturated with Space-Time, made from the material of Space-Time although different from it. For Alexander, unlike Locke, had no motive which demanded that substratum should be depicted as unknowable and mysterious. Both, however, had outlooks demanding expression in terms of the notion of a substratum, and this accounts for the striking similarity of their views as their motives account for the differences between them. Alexander's picture we might say, (and I shall say more of what I mean by this recurrent term soon), belongs to the Lockeian school of metaphysical painting but his interests in painting it produce difference of stylistic detail.

Berkeley and Russell shared the attitude which generates a strong reaction against the expressions of the Locke-Alexander type of outlook. Sense-evidence to them is sacred, and any slur apparently cast upon its worth arouses strong animosity. I think we can say that their attitude is primarily an antagonism to the distinction between appearance and reality made by advocates of substratum views, and it is rather their motives which supply the reason for the constructive character of their theories.

To Berkeley Locke's portrayal of the external world seemed not merely incorrect, but abhorrent. We noticed how he spoke of it in the strongest terms - it is a "thorn in the side", Matter must be "expelled out of nature", it is "unthinking" and "inert" and "stupid", all of which phrases suggest that the issue meant a little more to him than a desire to point out that Locke's theory was merely incorrect. Professor Luce, whose imaginative affinity with this outlook is so close because he also seems to share Berkeley's motive in expressing it, has said that Berkeley denied

> "an external world which no experience can reach; he denied an external world in the outer darkness, unseen, unknown, uncared for.." 6

This statement from an eminent authority on Berkeley indicates how much attitude plays a part in his metaphysical theory. Mr. Warnock has made the same point:

> "He (Berkeley) is clearly made most uncomfortable by the view that what there really <u>is</u> in the world is, as Locke held, an inert, featureless, 'stupid' something, of which we know nothing except that it exists and is called 'matter'. Berkeley would detest so brutish a world as this, even if the assertion of its existence had not appeared to him to bristle with gross mistakes and disastrous consequences." 7

While it would probably be admitted that Berkeley's reaction against Locke's view had much to do with emotional attitude, it is often

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6. Luce, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 27

7. Warnock, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 93

said that Russell's rebellion against the concept of "a material thing" was justified on grounds of logic. While I think it is true that his motive was to exhibit the usefulness of applying principles of other disciplines, e.g. formal logic, to metaphysical questions, I also think it is evident that by rebelling against the concept of "a material thing" he was fighting the substratum view which it harbours, and expressing the very distaste which Berkeley expressed. An effort to show this was made in Chapter Seven.

I ventured to say in Chapter Eight[8] that more contemporary discussions, for example those about which terminology is best suited for the description of the material world, and those about which theories offend least against the supposed canons of ordinary language, seem to involve the expression of a general attitude of the type I have described. For example, it seemed that the only point in advocating the terminology of sense-data for philosophical problem-solving is that it is a way of taking sides in the Locke-Berkeley dispute. Modern logical positivists, and other linguistic analysts, have shown strong preferences for Berkeley's theory, viz. phenomenalism, (with the religious part of the picture erased), over Locke's. The reason for this commonly given is that 'logical analysis' shows that it is more correct or convenient to analyse statements about material things into statements about sense-data than into statements about substrata. But this reason seems to be as much an interpretation of what logical analysis shows as Berkeley's and Locke's reasons for their conclusions, and as little a description of any semantic or syntactic fact. The facts of logic and grammar can be interpreted as excuses for saying something like Berkeley, but also for saying something like Locke. They cannot determine what we should say, any more than the facts of experience can determine whether we should say that buses exist unperceived or that they do not.

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8. Section B of that Chapter

If this is so, it suggests that Professor Ayer and Mr. Warnock, for example, although they would be disgusted to be told that they have metaphysical attitudes, have definite outlooks on what the material world must really be like, expressed by views about how it really ought to be described. While it may seem queer on this hypothesis that Professors Ayer and Luce share an outlook which encourages them to sympathise with Berkeley rather than Locke, this is not so if we add that they, like Locke and Alexander, share an attitude but have different motives for expressing it.

Let us then consider the motives of Berkeley, Russell, and contemporary analysts for expressing the feeling that the material world is essentially sensory, and attempt to see how the similarity and the differences between them arise, as we did in the case of Locke and Alexander.

Berkeley's explicit motive, and there is no reason to doubt that it was his actual motive, was to 'prove' the "existence and immateriality of God"[9], to refute atheists and sceptics, to justify his favourite biblical texts, for example about "the supreme and wise spirit, in whom we live, move, and have our being."[10] He went so far as to state that if he could not inspire his readers with a pious sense of the presence of God he would consider his labours ineffectual.[11] Locke, he feels, turned the "visible beauty of the creation" into "a false imaginary glare".[12] His aim is to

> "attain conviction without all scruple, 'that the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good; that he is with us and keepeth us in all places whither we go, and giveth us bread to eat, and raiment to put on..'" etc. 13

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9. Berkeley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 23 (The Preface to the 1st Edition of the Principles)
10. ibid., p. 70 (PRINCIPLES, para. 66)
11. ibid., p. 113 (PRINCIPLES, para. 156)
12. ibid., p. 211 (Second Dialogue Between Hylas and Philonous)
13. ibid., pp. 112-113 (PRINCIPLES, para. 155)

Berkeley's motive, we might add, was to give a literal meaning and some sort of logical admissability to a certain appeal which these biblical texts might make to our imaginations. He wanted to give the appeal the force of deductive argument, to prove the existence of the sort of deity the texts suggest. Consequently his general attitude that the world of sense-experience must be the real world, that there is no mystery lurking behind the scenes, is expressed in order to prove the existence of a divine percipient, to give literal meaning to 'the eyes of the Lord are in every place'. It is expressed by argumentation which makes it seem that the only way to avoid self-contradiction is to postulate such a God. Ideas imply a percipient, things are collections of ideas, but they sometimes exist in the absence of human percipients, and sometimes we have collections of ideas which turn out not to be real things; therefore a non-human, divine mind must cause those ideas which constitute real things, which can exist in the absence of human percipients. Therefore God exists, and directly apprehends our ideas, which form a divine language.

Where Berkeley's motive was to inspire his readers with a pious sense of the presence of God, I suggested that Russell's might be described as a wish to inspire his readers with a pious sense of the advent of "scientific philosophy".[14] The strange thing about Russell's motive is that the objective 'scientific' spirit which he aims to bring into his philosophy is notably absent from it. In Chapter Seven I argued that this use of the word 'scientific' is either trivial - i.e. to indicate that Russell borrows some mathematical and methodological notions from other disciplines - or for prestige value, and not literal. We might consequently re-read Russell's motive as a desire to employ the concepts which he had found so useful in logic and the foundations of mathematics in order to establish a certain Leibnitzian picture of the world which will leave no room for the substratum picture against which he so violently reacted. Russell's

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14. i.e. in Chapter Six of this thesis.

fondness for Heraclitus, and his surprising but plainly sincere belief that a bit of mysticism or poetic imagination added to scientific or logical enquiry produces "the highest eminence in the world of thought",[15] certainly seems to cancel out the claims he made for his own theory, that, unlike the traditional metaphysics of the past, it would be more than an embodiment of "personal idiosyncrasies".

The similarity of the views of Berkeley and Russell, which at first seems surprising since one claims to be a logico-scientific hypothesis and the other a proof for the existence of a divine mind, is explicable if we think in terms of the general outlook which produced both. The differences relate to the different motives. In both theories the world is portrayed as a network of discrete percepts united by mental activity into physical things. But in one the mental activity concerned is attributed to a divine mind, since the motive is religious, and in the other it is attributed to human minds, since the motive is to show the applicability of principles of mathematical logic to the description of the material world. The two motives are related in turn to different interests - theological and scientifico-mathematical respectively.

Motives of contemporary linguistic analysts, like Mr. Warnock, for defending a type of phenomenalist outlook, are usually determined by a strong interest in ordinary language, which appears to them to be less misrepresented by Berkeley's type of theory than by Locke's. They often give as an explicit aim the promise that they will attempt to "clarify" something about material-object statements with ordinary language as their guide. We must not forget, however, that there appears to be nothing in ordinary language itself which demands clarification - that is, for the practical purposes with which ordinary language is concerned. As I tried to show, the kind of analysis undertaken by Mr. Warnock is not called for at all by the

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15. Russell, "Mysticism and Logic", loc. cit., p. 11

semantic or grammatical facts themselves. Normally we all know what we mean when we talk of chairs and tables, and if we miss someone's meaning, the thing is to appeal to grammar or the dictionary, or to ask for an ordinary paraphrase, and certainly not to consult a linguistic philosopher.

Motives of contemporary linguistic analysts like Professor Ayer on the other hand are rather different - if we can take Language, Truth and Logic as containing representative statements at least of what he once believed. They are not determined so much by a strong interest in ordinary language, as by a strong determination to show that metaphysical problems can be resolved by the introduction of special terminologies. Phenomenalism attracts them because the terminology of sense-data seems to be the one in which problems of perception can be most fully "analysed", or "clarified", and so by this substitute for ordinary language they can claim to show that problems of perception disappear when linguistic conjuring tricks are performed. But again, there are no 'problems of perception', or lack of clarity in the ordinary vocabulary of perception, until philosophers introduce them by making certain technical classifications which were discussed in the last chapter. I submit, then, that these kinds of motive are as much justifications resulting from non-philosophical interests in language, of a metaphysical point of view about what the material world must really be like, in terms of what is required by a certain kind of linguistic construction, as the motives of Locke, Berkeley, Alexander and Russell.

It remains to be described how attitudes and motives are connected with what I have been calling, variously, metaphysical pictures, imaginative models of the material world, portrayals, etc. I realise that these metaphorical expressions lack precision, but they do seem to convey what kind of thing a metaphysical conclusion is, and at present I can think of no way of indicating this without the aid of analogy. The attempt to gain greater precision will therefore be made by developing the analogy, and pointing out where it fits and where it does not.

The analogy, of course, is with works of art. I do not mean to push it too far. A metaphysical theory is unlike a painting or a piece of music or sculpture, for its ostensible object is to prove something, which is not usual with a work of art. It is even unlike a poem or a novel, because its medium involves deductive argumentation of a kind quite alien to sonnets or sagas. It replaces poetic imagery and idiom by the logical treatment of facts and propositions, by interpretations of the implication of the data, and by a comprehensive theory about all that exists in the material world, all that ever has and ever will exist. Yet I believe that metaphysical views expressed in prose are more like Lucretius' De Rerum Natura than might appear at first; they treat a vast subject-matter by trying, like poetry, to evoke an imaginative response.

The final effect of a metaphysical theory is to give us a certain impression of what the material world could be like, a way of looking at old things anew, in a very general and abstract way. All four metaphysicians whose theories illustrate this thesis intend to tell us what the world is really like. A poet or a painter might claim that his work showed what a mountain was really like, and so contrast his presentation of the mountain with what the mountain appears to be like to the casual observer. He might express something by introducing empathy which would not normally occur to us - and he might make us see the mountain as a cruel crag or a soaring spire. Wordsworth enlivened mountains with a spiritual agency as Berkeley did, although the difference between poetry and metaphysics makes the comparison of poetical with metaphysical statements about mountains a thin one. For, of course, Wordsworth did not express his 'feeling for mountains' by deductive argument leading to quasi a priori proofs.

Although a metaphysical theory does give an impression of what the world might be like, this impression does not bear verification. I hope I have shown that the facts about the world and its normal description (from which it is developed) cannot possibly serve to refute or confirm the impression conveyed of their implications.

We accept, reject, or remain impartial to a metaphysical view according to whether we have an attitude which is expressed by it, conflicts with it, or no attitude of this type at all. To accept or reject a metaphysical conclusion we have to feel that it expresses something about the material world which must be true, or cannot possibly be true, and by this we subscribe to the appropriate point of view. Now this sort of point has often led philosophers to declare that metaphysical theories, since they are not refutable or verifiable, must be meaningless. Here again the analogy with works of art does, I think, help. Keats's Ode on a Grecian Urn is not the sort of thing anyone in their senses would judge by making a study of a Grecian urn, for in that way it is not literally about a Grecian urn at all, nor even literally about the figures on it, although these provide the data for Keats's imaginative interpretations. Even if we could look at the urn which Keats looked at, if there were one, it would be singularly inappropriate to test his Ode by comparing it with its subject-matter. None of the sentences in his poem would be suitable as a catalogue entry for an exhibition of Grecian urns; none of them are simply true or false descriptions of urns. Yet Keats's Ode is far from being a meaningless or even unclear combination of words. Similarly metaphysical theories, although strictly speaking they are not about the material world which provides the data for their interpretations, are not appropriately tested by observation; yet they do give an unmistakable impression of a way of thinking about it.

The general outlooks, or attitudes, which are expressed in metaphysical theory are, I think, more poetic than rational, involving an imaginative point of view rather than the spirit of impartial intellectual enquiry. It is noticeable that a metaphysician will often say at the beginning of a work that he is going to make an enquiry into something, and before the enquiry can be made prove to us by deductive argument that the result of that enquiry will be X. Metaphysicians know what they wish to express before they work out the argumentation with which to express it. For what they wish to express is determined by attitude and justified by motive - the argumentation

which follows is a matter of interpreting the data in accordance with their attitudes and motives. Where a scientist reaches his conclusion by working through series of empirical examinations and rational arguments, it seems to me that a metaphysician reaches his arguments by using his conclusion as a blueprint for his arguments in the first place.

The impulse to speculate about the ultimate nature of the material world is akin to the poetic impulse, but the form in which it is expressed is different - i.e. deductive argument. The view that metaphysical theories are a kind of poetry expressed in terms of abstract argumentation may startle when stated so bluntly, but it is strongly suggested by statements which philosophers themselves have made about them. In addition to Mr. MacKinnon's remark quoted at the head of this chapter, he also said that metaphysics had a "curious poetic character".[16] Professor Wisdom has suggested the mixture of intellect and heart in metaphysics[17], and Dr. Macdonald has suggested in a question that metaphysical 'belief', if we can call it such, is a very different kind of belief from that in empirical hypotheses.[18] Clearly philosophers frequently find grounds for suspecting that metaphysical conclusion, and probably theological and aesthetic conclusion, has more to do with imaginative outlook and interest than with impartial enquiry, or dispassionate weighing of the evidence. The evidence for this sort of conclusion is never weighed dispassionately, since before it can be judged it has to be created by an interpretation of the facts, which in themselves provide no evidence for or against the conclusion.

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16. D.M. MacKinnon, "Metaphysical and Religious Language", loc. cit., p. 117

17. See John Wisdom, Philosophy and Psycho-Analysis, p. 181: "Chance and Necessity, Freedom and Deity, Mind and Matter, Space and Time, - these words have in them the detachment of the intellect but also echoes from the heart,.."

18. See Margaret Macdonald, "Ethics and the Ceremonial Use of Language", loc. cit., p. 226. "Newton was a great scientist; he was also a devout Christian. Did he believe the law of gravitation as he believed the Apostles' Creed ?"

I shall summarise my suggestion about the nature of metaphysical theories, before going on in the final section to explain how it fits those characteristics of the Locke-Berkeley dispute which have appeared the most puzzling in this study.

Briefly, I suggest that the data for a metaphysical theory about the material world is itself unprovocative, and does not naturally evoke or require any metaphysical description or explanation. Since metaphysicians approach it, however, from a certain point of view, they interpret this data in the service of their general attitudes or outlooks; reinterpretations are then made in accordance with specific motives. The result is that we are presented with imaginative models of material reality which express the attitudes, result from the interpretations, and fulfil specific motives. They are related to the material world because they are the result of interpretations of the material world; they are not related to it as descriptions of mountains are related to mountains. A metaphysical picture, like a work of art, expresses something about its subject-matter, but does not photograph it.

As I tried to show in the last chapter, the interpretations which metaphysicians make of data are by no means all of the same type. They are as varied as the arguments into which they are transformed. In this way any summary of the hypothesis about metaphysical dispute is oversimplified. In what follows I shall try to give a detailed account of what seems to be the pattern of the dispute, and this way questions still unanswered - e.g. why metaphysical conclusions are couched in a priori terms - can be faced.

(B) THE EXPRESSION OF MOTIVES AND ATTITUDES IN METAPHYSICAL DISPUTE

The chief reason why the otherwise helpful analogy between metaphysical theories and works of art breaks down is that the former are expressed in a medium which is alien to the latter - deductive argumentation. It is now necessary to make a brief reference to the relation between this argumentation and what I have called

metaphysical motives, attitudes, interpretations and imaginative models.

In Chapter Nine I pointed out that the same ordinary fact, belief or statement is sometimes interpreted by two metaphysicians as a reason for different conclusions. Several examples have been given. One of them was the way in which Locke and Berkeley pointed to the need to account for the ordinary belief in the continuity and unity of physical objects in order to make most dissimilar claims. Locke turned this common belief into one of his reasons for supposing that things are "some substratum" by which "ideas" are caused. Berkeley turned it into part of his argument for believing that God directly apprehends our veridical "ideas". This hitherto puzzling feature of the metaphysical dispute, that A can conclude that P implies P1 while B is free to conclude that it implies P2 - (where ordinarily P implies neither P1 nor P2, nor the denial of them, nor any other metaphysical conclusion) - can now be explained as the result of interpretation made in the service of attitude and motive. The point of making metaphysical interpretations of the facts is to establish imaginative models for the external world which will express an attitude and fulfil a motive.

Yet the expression "to <u>establish</u> an imaginative model for the external world" is justly suspect. For the analogy it suggests seems to crash when we remember how absurd it would be to talk of <u>establishing</u> or <u>proving</u> a picture, <u>demonstrating</u> a poem, or showing that the conclusion of a symphony <u>follows from</u> its movements. It has been clear that metaphysics differs from art in having deductive argumentation as its medium.

If that deductive argumentation were indeed like the theorems of geometry or the inferences from mathematical equations, there would be small excuse for pursuing the analogy with works of art any further. But the "deductive argumentation" of metaphysics does not seem to me to be like that of the formal systems of mathematics and logic, nor like that gaining its power from the common use of language - e.g.

"If an animal has four legs it is a quadruped". Throughout this thesis I have tried to give examples of how metaphysicians claim to "establish" their conclusions "a priori". It seemed that the conclusions are never empirically testable, and are logically binding upon us if and only if we accept the redefinitions and presuppositions of the system to which they belong. For example, "abstract ideas cannot exist" is necessarily true if and only if we retain the ordinary meaning of 'idea' so that an idea entails that some person has it, but also extend the ordinary meaning so that 'idea' is applicable to colours and shapes as well as thoughts and images. It is necessarily true that real things are imperceptible if and only if we agree that 'thing' has two incompatible meanings - "real things" and "perceptible things". Of course, in each case we have to agree to more presuppositions in order to accept the specially created a priori conclusion; in the interests of brevity I quote the main redefinitions in these examples, and refer the reader to previous chapters for fuller accounts.

The method of metaphysical dispute is to establish one's own conclusions in this sort of way, and exhibit the unwanted conclusions of rivals as "nonsense", "self-contradictory", "absurd", etc.

> "It is not uncommon for philosophers to take scornful attitudes to each other's views and to dismiss them as ridiculous and an outrage to our intelligence. Indeed, one is tempted to think that an important technique of refutation in philosophy is scorn and ridicule, a technique, that is to say, of intellectual intimidation." 19

Berkeley seeks to establish the self-contradictory absurdity of Locke's view and the a priori certainty of his own. Locke seeks to prove that it is logically impossible to know the nature of substance, which nevertheless must exist. Alexander asserts that Space-Time is a necessary feature of all things. Russell says that it is an outrageous fiction to suppose that a material thing is other than a series of sense-data. Indeed, the conclusions advanced by all four are irrefutable by reference to fact, language, ordinary belief, or an agreed logical system. If we accept the interpretations and definitions which render

19. Morris Lazerowitz, "Negative Terms", Philosophy and Analysis, p. 70

them necessarily true in terms of the system in which they figure, there is no possible argument which will shake our conviction that they are conclusively established. In this sense alone, all metaphysical conclusions are necessarily true; in another sense, no metaphysical conclusion is 'true' or 'false' in any way, for it is not a description, but an expression of personal outlook made to appear as if it is about material reality.

It would be impossible to explain, as far as I can see, why it is that some philosophers accept some systems and reject others unless we think in terms of attitudes, and the appeal to the imagination by certain models of the world. In order to accept metaphysical conclusions, it is necessary to accept certain definitions and interpretations, or ways of looking at facts and propositions; in order to do this, it is necessary to have a certain attitude, of a kind which can be expressed in a broad and general picture of what the material world is like.

Now we are in a better position to see that a metaphysical conclusion is not necessarily true as a theorem is necessarily true, although both follow from a process of deduction. This is because each metaphysician provides his own axioms - there is no generally accepted set, and there is no obvious criterion for judging their worth. A metaphysical conclusion is a necessary truth which has been especially created, and is not one which is certified by any generally accepted rule. It has been created through interpretation in order to say that the material world <u>must</u> be such-and-such. The choice between rival conclusions is made on purely subjective grounds, in other words, we have to <u>feel</u> that the material world <u>must</u> be X and cannot possibly be Y, or not-X.

I do not think that the analogy with works of art breaks down as completely as it seemed to do. For while a painter's skill lies in the manipulation of paints and brushes, we can say that a metaphysician's skill lies in his manipulation of words and their

meanings. This might also be said, of course, of a poet; so we can qualify the statement about the metaphysician by adding that his manipulation of words and their meanings is made in accordance with logical patterns, where the poet's is made in accordance with patterns designed to evoke not primarily rational or intellectual responses, but emotional or imaginative ones. Like all generalisations, this must be qualified. But it does seem to be true that the metaphysician creates, like the poet, an imaginative impression, but, unlike the poet, aims to make his work of art convincing by investing his conclusion with a compelling logical force - that of necessary truth. However, if we recall the obsession of poets with "poetic truth", or "imaginative truth", this difference between them and metaphysicians does not seem very clear.

Mr. MacKinnon's comment that metaphysics sometimes emerges as the attempt to convert poetry into the logically admissable is no exaggeration.[20] The basic attitude giving rise to a metaphysical theory is like a poetic impulse or attitude. It is expressed through logical argument, created especially to impose a certain imaginative design on the external world, and the impression that the design must (logically) be the real pattern. A poetic outlook is expressed to create a metaphysical impression of what the world is really like; but this is done by making the impression seem to be, not merely logically admissable, but logically binding upon us, and fortified against refutation. Metaphysical theories, I have argued, are "must-be"theories.

If this suggestion is correct, or nearly correct, we can reject for good the frequent comment, already discussed, that metaphysics offends against ordinary language. In order to express an imaginative outlook in terms of formal argumentation leading to a priori conclusions, the ordinary application of terms has to be extended or restricted or added to by technical terms. A special vocabulary is needed for the purpose. Then to say that a metaphysician misuses language is surely just like saying that T.S. Eliot misuses language, or contradicts himself, when he speaks of "paralysed force and gesture

20. Quoted under this chapter heading

without motion". And, as a logician has insisted in another connection,

> "To say a language fails to come up to certain specifications when it was not constructed according to them is simply nonsense." 21

If metaphysical views are so autonomous, it is easy to see why they are irrefutable, but it may seem odd that they are disputed. The Locke-Berkeley dispute is persistent as well as irresolvable. Philosophers still think that they can refute Berkeley or Locke, Alexander or Russell. I believe they still think this, and the dispute is persistent, because attitudes and motives are the impetus. The attitude expressed in the phenomenalist design is an antagonistic one. It rebels against the portrayal of material reality as something separable from experience. If someone feels very strongly that he cannot have imaginative sympathy with the substratum picture, the obvious metaphysical reaction is to attack it by using the medium of abstract argumentation, to seek to establish that it is plain nonsense, or irrational, or utterly ridiculous. Although substratum theories are irrefutable in terms of their native interpretations, they can be attacked in terms of different interpretations. This is what happens. While substratum theories cannot be refuted, they can be replaced. They are in fact replaced by those philosophers who have a different outlook to express. The philosophers who attack a rival theory, we noticed, do so with missionary zeal, and their attacks are not over even when they have "demonstrated" that the opponent is talking rubbish. Berkeley, for example, having provided an *a priori* demonstration that since abstract ideas are contradictions-in-terms, and Substance is an abstract idea, then Substance is self-contradictory, goes on to devote endless and detailed argument to showing that Substance cannot exist. A notable feature of the metaphysical dispute is the ability of the contestants to take what

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21. Alice Ambrose, "The Problem of Linguistic Inadequacy", *Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Max Black, Cornell University: 1950. p. 34

they call "nonsense" sufficiently seriously to spend time and trouble on its "refutation". They half recognise that "nonsense" has been given a special sense in their theories, which needs constant elucidation. From their procedure we can recognise that a strong attitude and motive drives them to take the trouble.

Many philosophers have believed that there is in most metaphysical views "an element of truth", although in none is there the whole truth, and in none nothing but the truth. This is reminiscent of those popular theologians who argue that all religious paths lead by different routes to the same God. It assumes that there is an ultimate set of truths about the real nature of the material world, which only metaphysical thought can reveal, and which it is so difficult to reveal that thousands of years of metaphysical speculation have not yet produced fruit comparable to one year of scientific endeavour. This seems in itself a half-built metaphysical view. The plain facts just do not warrant the belief that there is something about the real nature of the material world which can be revealed by abstract speculation divorced from the methods of enquiry and testing which have proved successful in science. People who express this outlook are likely to be thwarted metaphysicians who subscribe to no system, own no metaphysical picture, but cannot help feeling that there is more to the nature of a flower or a tree than can be revealed by the senses, commonsense, botany, physics, chemistry, or etc. This is because they accept the presupposition of all metaphysics, that the question to be answered is one about the ultimate, comprehensive, nature of Material Objects. Since they have no specific motive, and no metaphysical preference, they express the feeling that there is an ultimate nature of the world which philosophy could discover by speaking of grains of truth in different theories.

Other philosophers, for example, if I understand him properly, Professor Wisdom, believe that metaphysical theories emphasise certain ordinary truths ate the expense of others, and in this sense they all contain grains of truth. There is no objection to this description,

which does indeed point out a feature of metaphysical theories which is particularly interesting, as long as it does not imply, what I think it is sometimes intended to signify, that metaphysicians deny or ignore those ordinary truths which they do not emphasise. For the point which I have tried hard to make, and which seems important, is that metaphysicians take pains to accommodate all the facts that need to be accounted for, and deny or ignore none of them.

I am convinced that unless we introduce into our explanation of metaphysical dispute some such concept as attitude, or outlook, or imaginative point of view, and also some such concept as motive, or interest, or reason for expressing the attitude in terms of argumentation, we are at a loss to explain its irresolvability and persistence. Consider once again the Locke-Berkeley dispute about abstract ideas. It is a form of the age-old dispute about universals, and it has been going on since Plato, and shows no signs of dying today. Yet regarded impartially it seems a useless sort of talk at cross purposes. One side stresses that general terms have connotations, the other that they have denotations. They do, of course, have both, and there is no obvious reason for stressing either. But some philosophers take it that if 'colour' connotes something, it must be an abstract idea, or a universal, or some other metaphysical interpretation is made. While others keep pointing out that 'colour' denotes particular instances of colour - yellow,red,white,etc. - which are sensory qualities, or sense-data, or individuals, or some other results of metaphysical classification. Then some philosophers go on to say that general words cannot be replaced by lists of particular words, and others retort that in principle there is no reason why they should not be. By this time the simple fact that general terms connote and also denote has been transformed in mutually incompatible ways, so that it is made to seem an argument for abstract ideas, etc., and also an argument for the rebellion against abstract ideas, etc. Now since the simple fact naturally, in its native habitat of ordinary semantics and grammar, suggests

nothing either for or against theories about universals or abstract ideas, appeal to it serves neither to refute nor to confirm either theory. It seems that the dispute, irresolvable but continued, is futile. In fact, it would seem like the dispute in the Irish pub about whether a zebra is a white animal with black stripes, or a black animal with white stripes. Yet since some of the most clever people throughout a large portion of European History and a growing portion of American History have spent time in perpetuating the dispute, the conclusion that it is deliberate futility must miss a point. The point, I believe, is that a metaphysical theory, like a work of art, expresses an outlook and is built with a motive.

On this hypothesis, the man who interprets the fact that general terms have connotations to signify that there are abstract ideas, etc., does so because of his desire to synthesise rather than analyse, to insist that there are non-sensory entities, to portray what exists not merely in terms of what we experience. The rebellion comes because others desire to analyse, to "think in the concrete", to emphasise the importance of sense-experience, and ultimately the "silliness" of non-sensory entities. This leads these other philosophers to interpret the fact that general words have denotations as indicative of the absurdity they see in the postulation of abstract ideas, universals, and what Russell would call metaphysical monsters, for general words on their interpretation are convenient symbols for making general reference to particular sensory experiences.

The dispute continues unresolved, irresolvably. Different painters and art critics, and members of the general public, may disagree violently about the merits of two stylistically opposed paintings of Sir Winston Churchill. They would have no difficulty in agreeing that a clear photograph showed what he is like. The painters who have made a study of his appearance see, in a literal sense, the same man. But, they say, a painting is meant to show what he is <u>really</u> like, e.g. an aspect of him considered to be important is emphasised. So a closer study of the man will not help to resolve the argument about which painting shows what he is really like. To

resolve this dispute, the contestants would have to come to share each other's point of view, to have the same imaginative impression, to agree what he is really like, i.e. to agree to emphasise the same aspects of his personality and so of his appearance.

Once more this analogy seems helpful. For when a metaphysician abandons a view he once held, I believe it is true to say of what has happened that he has come to see certain facts or propositions in a new light, from an angle he did not have before. Russell, for example, in his later work, as quoted in Chapter Five, admitted that a material object, which he had previously regarded as no more than a series of sense-data, might have a "substance at the centre", This seems to me to show, more than anything, that he had a change of attitude leading to a change of interpretation. For in his earlier work Russell described such a thought as "gratuitous metaphysical speculation", and regarded Substance as one of the metaphysical monsters which he was pledged to kill. To come to comtemplate even its possibility, where no new facts had meanwhile emerged to change his mind, indicates a fresh imaginative outlook.

By explaining metaphysical dispute in these terms, there is a danger of giving the impression that metaphysics is neater and more ordered than it is. Without intending to be mystical or obscurantist, one can remember that a part of a pattern is what it is because it is part of a pattern, while the pattern is what it is because it has those parts. The point of saying this here is that in speaking of the parts of a metaphysical pattern separately it may be suggested that those parts are strictly separable. Probably much linguistic analysis of metaphysics fails to convey a plausible account of what metaphysics is like simply because it concentrates on the verbal tricks that are played, without wondering why they are played, or how it is that they arouse animosity in those who play different tricks. To discuss attitudes, motives, interpretations, or imaginative models, and the parts they seem to play in metaphysics, is like discussing the purpose, the symbols, and the appearance of a map. It suggests that these elements are more discrete than they are, that there is no overlapping.

However, since my purpose has been to say what the elements in the Locke-Berkeley dispute are which give rise to certain features, it was necessary to talk about them separately, and now it is time to admit that I do not believe they are neatly separable. If someone, for example, prefers to say that attitudes are indistinguishable from interpretations in metaphysics, or that imaginative models are indistinguishable from interpretations, I shall feel that I have gained my point. For at least it would then have been agreed that these elements are involved, and probably it would have been more apparent to the critic how they coalesce in the pattern than it has been in my attempts to make an analytic study.

I hope I have shown why I believe this hypothesis about the nature of the metaphysical dispute explains its irresolvability and persistence. Now I wish to claim that it also explains the mixed logical style of the theories involved. It seemed odd that metaphysicians should so often inform us that a statement is necessarily true, then go on to ask us to examine some fact or common belief in order to verify it, when in any case the fact or common belief concerned could neither serve to verify or refute the statement concerned. Berkeley, for example, asks us to try to think of something existing unperceived, having already told us that according to his definitions it is self-contradictory to speak of such a thing. For thinking of something, on his terms, logically entails perceiving it. We are asked to conduct experiments which it is logically impossible should turn out to refute the metaphysical statement we are supposed to be testing.

I tried to show in Chapter Nine that the data for the metaphysical dispute is varied. One reason why metaphysical theories are couched in a mixed a priori/empirical style is quite simply because their data include both genuine necessarily true propositions and ordinary empirical statements and beliefs. But I think one can be more informative on this question by reflecting upon the logical status of the metaphysical interpretations of the data. These do not fit comfortably either into the category "necessary statements" nor into the category "contingent statements", although, with a squeeze this way or that, they could be made to fit under either heading. A metaphysical interpretation

is empirical in so far as it is an interpretation of a fact or a proposition about some item or items in the world. It is not empirical in so far as it is untestable by the fact. We cannot refute a metaphysical interpretation, and this suggests that we should call it necessarily true. Yet it relates to a fact, and is the result of an attitude, and this suggests that we should call it contingent. The way in which a metaphysical interpretation plays a two-faced logical role - that is, the way in which it is possible to regard it as contingent or necessary, depending on the point of view - enables metaphysicians to endow their special renderings of the facts both with the apparent relevance to the world of contingent statements and with the logical certainty of a priori statements. The framework is provided for asserting that the material world is, as a matter of fact, such-and-such, and further that it could not possibly be, as a matter of logic, anything but such-and-such.

I believe it is true to say that the strength of a metaphysical picture depends upon this characteristic of the interpretations which are the arguments designed to persuade us to accept it. This is seldom recognised. Mr. Warnock, for instance, spoke of Berkeley's interpretations this way:

> "Berkeley would have saved himself and us from much labour, if he had not so often disguised the necessary truths of his theory as seemingly obvious falsehoods in ordinary language." 22

He had in mind in particular that while "sensible things are sensations" is a necessary truth, "sensible qualities are sensations" is just plain false. But of course Berkeley himself over and over again made the point that in his terms sensible things and sensible qualities, and images and mountains alike, are all sensations - all mind-dependent. The fact that he interprets a genuine necessary truth in order to make it cover items which in ordinary language it does not cover, explains the provocative character of esse est percipi, gives us the reason why philosophers have never ceased to be delighted or plagued by Berkeley's theory. If, as Mr. Warnock suggests, perhaps as a joke, Berkeley had confined himself to uttering ordinary tautologies, without playing metaphysical tricks with them, we should

22. Warnock, op. cit., p. 162

indeed have been saved much labour, for there would have been no point left in reading his works. We should not, in fact, have been provided by him with any metaphysical theory at all. For I hope I have indicated that metaphysical speculation is impossible unless facts and propositions are interpreted rather than described, and rather than analysed in accordance with a predetermined set of supposed ordinary language criteria.

Professor Luce, for example, has said, (speaking for himself and Berkeley), that "the metaphysical deductions" - for example the deduction that God imprints veridical ideas upon our senses -

> "are, to the immaterialist, inevitable deductions from the psychological facts" 23

This seems a clear statement of the situation. To the 'immaterialist' the facts, for example that there is a distinction between oranges and images of oranges, seem to entail the conclusion that God imprints some ideas on our minds and not others. If we accept the terms, for example of the Berkleian system, they do entail those conclusions. They do, because the conclusions follow after certain interpretations have been made. No such conclusions would be entailed by those facts unless they had been freely interpreted in the service of an attitude and special motive.

We adopt the metaphysics which pleases us most and suits our interests best. To complain that metaphysicians disguise their data is to complain that they are metaphysicians. I hope I have shown that metaphysics is unique, and to pretend that it does something less well that some other subject does better is to overlook the possibility that its purposes and results may be incomparable with those of other endeavours. It is because of this that I do not wish my analogy between metaphysics and art to be taken too literally. It just seemed to be a helpful device for bringing out some of the ways in which metaphysics is so unlike purely descriptive or empirical studies.

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23. Luce, op. cit., p. 108

I do not believe that the suggestions made here in an attempt to explain the irresolvability, persistence, and mixed logical idiom of metaphysical dispute (in particular of the Locke-Berkeley dispute) do more than provide the tentative and probably incorrect outlines of a map for further exploration. The nature of metaphysics is largely uncharted country. Scholars and historians have made and travelled many roads, but a vast hinterland, as I intimated in the Introduction, seems to me to remain virtually unexplored.

A few philosophers have hacked their way through some of the jungle, and the light they have let in has made this study possible. The hypothesis I offer as a map may not have correct outlines, but it seems to reflect the points which demand explanation in any study of the function of metaphysical statements.

First, that metaphysical assertions, though not testable, based on subjective attitudes and inspired by personal motives, are neither nonsense, unprovocative, nor mistaken. Secondly, that their conclusions are <u>a priori</u> true in the sense that they have to be accepted if the interpretations which back them and the attitudes they express are accepted. Thirdly, that however often philosophers wash their hands of metaphysical speculation, it continues to colour their work, it has a fascination we cannot escape, for it is one way of expressing basic outlooks and personal preferences, and perhaps the most thoughtful way. Finally, however hard we try to refute a metaphysical view, our hands are tied by its own logical rules. It is autonomous, like a work of art.

My hope is that I have helped to show that the jungle is not unexciting, yet that its exotic blooms are not without a natural explanation.

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